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By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Priest plays stock market, dreams of BMW, Pajero

By Christine Figueroa

Tuesday, March 22, 2005 ▲ 32 pages | vol. 28 | no. 104

GMA rushes VAT approval

Senators expect special session quorum but doubt passage

INTERFAITH PRAYER RALLY
Representatives of different religious gather for an interfaith prayer rally for social change in front of Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig, the scene of a recent police assault on Abu Sayyaf inmates who took over the jail facility. (MARIANNE BERMUDEZ)

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Juliet Labog-Javellana

DESPITE warnings that lawmakers are unlikely to sit short their Easter break, President Macapagal-Arroyo has called for a three-day special session after the Holy Week because every week of delay in the value-added tax (VAT) reform is costing the government P1.25 billion in foregone revenues.

Malacañang issued Proclamation No. 31, which orders the holding of a special session from March 30 to April 1, after the Senate failed to pass the VAT bill before it finalize the bills raising the VAT rate from 10 percent to 12 percent and lifting the VAT exemptions on power and petroleum sales and the services of professionals like doctors.

The President had expected to complete the VAT reforms by March 16, or before the Lenten break of Congress.

"The President has made incredible mind out of the possibility of having an opening in the special session, but the government does," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a briefing in Malacañang.

The Constitution allows the President to call for a special session to pass urgent legislation.

Albay Rep. Joey Salceda warned that the delay in VAT reforms would cost the country P1.25 billion in foregone revenues every week.

"The country will lose much more in terms of collateral damage to financial markets—weakening, high interest rates, lower valuations and missed economic opportunities," Salceda said.

The perceived the stock market had dumped significantly since the Senate failed to pass the VAT reform bills last week.

"By calling a special session, the administration sends a strong signal of its spirited pursuit of the officials," Salceda said.

The VAT reforms are expected to generate up to P60 billion in new revenues, or more than three-fourths of the P80-billion target that the President said would be enough to cure the fiscal crisis.

Many international credit rating firms earlier this year downgraded the Philippines, citing high government debt and tardy reforms. The downgrade increased the cost of borrowing for the government, which plans to raise P4 billion from international bond markets this year.

The last time the President called a special session, in early January this year, only a handful of lawmakers cut short their Christmas vacation to heed Malacañang's appeal to approve new tax measures.

Senators expect a quorum but

(Story on A2)

Tourists here to see Pinoys crucify selves

By Nikko Dizon and Christian V. Esguerra

PRAY 'AGAINST THE FILE?
Members of the Kalipunan ng Dimasyang Makibaka up hold the traditional Holy Week "pabasa" on the railroad tracks to mark the burden of the Filipino poor. (RICHARD GUTIERREZ)

Slain priest hailed as true martyr

By Armand N. Nocum

SOME MUSLIMS may believe that Abu Sayyaf Commander Robot and Kosovo have gone to paradise, but it was the people there tortured and killed who were the "true martyrs."

Or has the world forgotten?

A Christian priest and colleagues of the late Fr. Rhod Ciudadano raised these points yesterday in their questioned why the last said some attempts to glorify the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) bandits killed during a failed jailbreak last week.

"We are losing sight of the true victims—Father Ciudadano, the teachers and children tortured and murdered by the Abu Sayyaf in Basilan. They were all defenseless. They were the real martyrs," Fr. Clarence Jones Cesero told the Inquirer.

Former Claretian seminarian Allan A. Hawkin said portraying the ASG intruder slain by the police in the Camp Bagong Diwa prison as "martyrs" pained the relatives and friends of their victims even more.

"They call the ASG martyrs? But they had gone with them. The real martyrs are their defenseless and helpless victims who died excruciating deaths," he said.

Four years ago on Sunday, the ASG abducted Ciudadano, the parish priest of Santa Clara and director of the Claret School in Basilan, and dozens of school teachers and pupils and brought them to the ASG's Camp Abdurasad in Sulu.

(Story on A14)

US-WIDE TILT

RP tenor wins top prize at Met Opera

ROSEL (on his toe during the Metropolitan Opera National Council Grand Finals at New York. (AP)

NEW YORK—A day after Filipino tenor Manny Pangilinan took a bowing from Metropolitan Opera star Marilyn Horne, another Filipino made waves in New York's classical music scene.

Tenor Isidro Jose Rosel, a 29-year-old Filipino musician who used to sing in weddings and birthday parties back home, on Sunday got his chance to sing on the stage of the prestigious Metropolitan Opera House as competitor in a final contest.

That's not all. Rosel of Los Baños City emerged one of the four winners of the Met National Council's 51st annual auditions, which have been described as "a star-making event" and "a launching pad for a dozen of tomorrow's Met."

And if history's any guide, Rosel will be back at the Met soon. Rosel auditioned separate Evelyn Mandac in the role of Filipina Cio-Cio-San in Giacomo Puccini's opera "Madama Butterfly."

Rosel, who is attending UCLA, and eight other rising opera singers were adjudged the best among more than 1,500 would-be stars who entered the US-wide competition. Those who made it through district-level competitions went on to regional auditions, and 21 semifinalists were then invited to New York, where they sang to private accompaniment for awards.

On Sunday, Rosel and each

(Story on A2)

Library rescues works of women writers

By Elizabeth Lalango

A PERSON'S consulted and received the works of the 19-year-old Ateneo Library of Women's Writings (Ateneo)—and said to us to, founders Edna J. Manlapaz and Soledad Reyes.

Ateneo is a facility which preserves the works of Filipina women writers and artists.

"In literature and feminist Gloria Guerero Nakpil's his that encouraging sentiment, Manlapaz—also served as Ateneo manager director for nine years—asked "What do you mean?"

Nakpil answered: "You should be collecting the works of Hen Jemimah."

Manlapaz and Reyes explained that Ateneo was "merely trying to keep it for playing Nakpil, saving on the line of male writers, publishers and anthologists' upstart women's works."

Even extremely capable women said Nakpil.

"Then I understand. I agree," Nakpil said, who then asked for an example of a woman writer who had been ignored/overlooked and has had been subsequently rescued.

Reyes cited journalist Lisa Ploe who, she said, was often discussed as a modern columnist until she wrote Ploe's biography that elevated the vast range of his writings, which included "Gulong ng Palad," the most successful daytime novel in Philippine radio history.

Manlapaz's own example was the poet Cirilo Bautista, who along Gloria, edited Ang Gaerya Ulit had discussed because her poetry was outdated.

Manlapaz also wrote a biography of Ilonga Dio and Bautista, are rarely led people to reevaluate their and should works but also introduced the lit-

(Story on A2)

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Filipino, Japanese seamen released

By Rob Cuaresma

A FILIPINO and two Japanese seamen surfaced in Thailand on Saturday, five days after their abduction by pirates operating in the Malacca Strait, the Department of Foreign Affairs reported yesterday.

The Philippine Business in Bangkok confirmed the release of Third engineer Edgardo Pagkatoan Sadang, along with his Japanese captain and chief engineer, in the waters off the coastal province of Satun in southeastern Thailand.

Armed pirates had seized Sadang, Capt. Nobuo Inoue and chief engineer Shunji Kuroda of the Mongolian-registered tugboat Idaten in the Malacca Strait at dusk of March 14. The rest of the tugboat's crew later arrived safely in Malaysia.

The three were transferred by river canoes to a Thai fishing vessel on Saturday and it was the fishing vessel's captain who alerted Thai marine police, according to the embassy.

Sadang, Kuroda and Inoue were greeted by Japanese officials and the company president, who traveled from Penang at the news of their release, to their hotel in Thailand.

BBK showed the three, dressed in matching navy blue polo shirts, walking out of their hotel escorted by Japanese and local officials.

Kuroda said the pirates took them to an island after changing boats more than five times, adding that the attackers "were very cautious."

"The night after we were kidnapped, we took a small boat to an island. We hardly sleep all the boat before reaching the shore and we waded through water to reach a sandy beach," he said.

He said he was fine, adding: "I only suffered a cut on my foot when we had to wade through mud to get ashore."

The tugboat was attacked March 14 off Malacca's fishing island, near the opening of the pirate-infested Strait of Malacca between Indonesia's Sumatra island and peninsular Malaysia. With AP

FILIPINO seamen third engineer Edgardo Sadang (right) and his colleagues tugboat Capt. Nobuo Inoue (center) and first engineer Shunji Kuroda arrive in Thailand after they were released by their pirate captors over the weekend.

Police raise alert on 2 would-be car bombers

By Luige B. del Puerto

BRIGHTENING the tension during the Iglesia season, police detained yesterday two Abu Sayyaf terrorists wounded in scrambling and intercepting car bombs had been sent to Metro Manila and other key cities in the country.

Intelligence Group Chief Supt. Ismael Rabanan identified the two as Abu Ilhan, 26, and Binto Hassan, describing them to both as their early 20s. He said the alleged bombers were trained by the al-Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah regional group in its camp in central Mindanao.

The latest development brings to nine the number of Abu Sayyaf members police said had been ordered to carry out bombings in major cities during the Holy Week.

"They are reported from the seven men earlier identified by the police," Rabanan said. "There was one deadline."

According to Rabanan, Ilhanbo and Hassan form a separate tandem and were directly ordered by a certain "Zaki," an Iraqi national earlier tagged by the police as the Counting officer of the JI in the Philippines.

"They are deadlier because they were given formal training on explosives and bombing techniques. Zaki has directly trained them," Rabanan said.

He said intelligence officers were trying to find the two men.

HASSAN ILHANBO

Three law bans on carrying of car bombing—a crucial weapon of Iraqi insurgents battling US occupation forces in Iraq—counter-to the Philippines as his. The bombs which killed or wounded several people in the past were usually placed in bags and left under the seats of buses or planted in unpainted areas.

A car bomb nearly exploded many days ago, according to Police Director Robert Delfin, chief of the Directorate for Intelligence. "The damages depends on how much explosives are packed in the car."

An intelligence official said earlier said the bombs that Abu Sayyaf men who had learned on Mt. Cararao were capable of carrying off car bombs.

"Yes, they know how to do it. They learned it until it, yet, strikes because they do not have the means for it, so are just waiting for the right time," the official said, adding that he are be arrested.

Rabanan said the two men had trained extensively in explosives-making on Mt. Cararao in central Mindanao, which was only be reached after a three-day walk from Marawi City.

The information are revealed from a report that authorities had arrested, three indigenous officials and without elaborating.

On Friday, police confirmed that the Abu Sayyaf were ordered planning to explode bombs during the Holy Week, a warning first raised by the Department of Justice.

Top police officials said also heard leader Abu Sulaiman had "relocated" his cell to Luzon to undertake bombings in key cities in the country, particularly in Metro Manila, after the police killed three of the group's top leaders in Tipo-Tipo on Sunday.

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Abu won't answer raps in media

By Dona Z. Pazolanga

HE WOULD fight any war, except the kind fought in the media.

Abdul Rasul of the Philippine chief of staff Gen. Efren Abu refused to be drawn into a word war with the rebel of an Army colonel who is under investigation for taking part in a P20.7-million ransom money extortion.

Maria Dominita Luganda, the wife of Lt. Col. Rilan Luganda, had accused Abu of favoring a relative in the contract in a letter to the Commission on Appointments before which Abu is scheduled to appear for confirmation.

Abu yesterday refused to answer media questions about the complaint filed by Dominita Luganda before the CA.

"I will answer that in the proper forum because I don't want a media war," Abu told reporters in an interview at Fort Bonifacio.

Despite persistent questioning, Abu remained tight-lipped.

Luganda complained to the CA that Abu had cancelled the ad clinch that she received from the army in December 2003 amounting to P2.7 million representing her share of a medical supplies deal.

Abu also had Luganda's husband placed under investigation for possible court-martial for violating a chief of staff memo barring family members of military officers age 21 to the fourth degree from doing business with the AFP.

Austerity marks Army celebration

AUSTERITY also marked the 100th anniversary of the Philippine Army yesterday at Fort Bonifacio.

Some of the usual grand parades and exhibitions marked the celebration.

On hand were top defense and military officials led by Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. and Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Efren Abu. No other government officials or foreign dignitaries had been invited to guests.

The program simply focused on recognizing soldiers who had distinguished themselves.

The awardees were led by Lt. Col. Dennis Villanueva, the 52nd Infantry Battalion (IB) commander who was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Conduct Star Medal.

Army chief lt. Gen. Generoso Senga presented the medal to Villanueva's widow, Evangeline.

Senga did not say how much was saved but this estimated the Army spent only about 30 percent of what it usually spent on such celebrations.

Maj. Rosanne Lavina, commander of the 36th IB, 4th Infantry Division, received the Distinguished Service Star.

Other awardees who received the Gold Cross for gallantry in combat were Cpl. Leo Cruz, team leader of the 2nd Special Forces Battalion, Special Forces Regiment, Special Operations Command (Scom); Sgt. Rolando Medina, squad leader of the Headquarters of Charlie Co., 1st Provisional Battalion, 7th IB, and Pfc. Rolando Olanch of Bravo Co., 27th IB, 6th ID. Dona Z. Pazolanga

Slain priest hailed as true martyr

From page A1

Then, according to accounts by witnesses and police later, the 34-year-old priest was ordered after he objected to the ASG bringing his name of the women hostages to be raped.

When soldiers overran the ASG camp, they found Dalfindo's brain had been blown off. He had also been shot in the back and in the abdomen.

The nails on his index fingers and toes had been ripped out.

Killed with Dalfindo were Ruben Ullan and Nelson Espenido, ex-Nurembo gobs" for then President Joseph Estrada.

Sorn Prosecutor Jesse Medalla, who is handling the criminal charges against the ASG, said it was Albanser Mustafa Limbong, alias Commander Kosovo, who had tortured Galicto-dejo pulling out his nails.

"If you are watching, Commander Kosovo, who had tortured Galicto-dejo pulling out his nails ... If you are watching, I'll tell you one thing: I'll tell you remember me," Medalla quoted Limbong as saying, presumably telling Galicto. Medalla said it was related to him by an ASG source and witnesses to the incident.

Birthday present for Drap

The ASG also executed teacher Jimmi Ullan and Nelson Espenido, ex-Nurembo gobs" for then President Joseph Estrada.

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Beaten senseless

Ramos, who led the Black 14 kidnapSabbah, and Ghalib Andang (Abbot) were among the 21 suspected ASG members killed by police. Their relatives, as well as Moslim religious leaders and residents at the Muslim Mahallika Village in Tagolig City, have backed them in their accounts to reporters.

"Sir, I Galicto) was first beaten senseless when he protested the decision of the ASG to drag him to Sr Wilabby Salvate, who was eight months pregnant, into the mountains," said Carlo, director of the Claret School of Tumbangan City.

Inspiration to others

Carlo lashed out at what he described as an "overkill" effort by some human rights groups to present the one-sided killing of the ASG men. He said those groups were nowhere around when the ASG executed Galicto and the others.

"In spite of the beatings and torture, he never gave up his faith or his life," Carlo said.

For his steadfastness, Galicto served as inspiration to other hostages, who were all at the verge of giving up all hope during their weeks of captivity.

Delfin Aguilar, a former Claretian seminarian who was close to Galicto, said that although the relatives of the ASG men were excluded in their beliefs, only Galicto deserved to be called a martyr.

Genuine martyr's death

"He gave a meaning to that martyrdom—he suffered and died for others. From the Christian point of view, he is the true martyr," he said.

Even while they were in the seminary, Carlo and Aguilar recalled that Galicto was known as the "little Christ" for his Catholic fervor and piety even outside the seminary.

Galicto was seen as the one that his wife must uphold the spirit of Saint Anthony Mary Claret (1807-1870), founder of the Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Claret himself endured persecution toward the end of his life.

Aguilar, a member of an organization of former Claretian priests and seminarians called Tao Oo, said they held up Galicto as an inspiration for their planned charitable work to help promote priestly vocations.

Apart from Galicto, the martyr says the countless victims of the atrocities of the ASG, Savaria said.

Priest plays stock market, dreams of BMW, Pajero

From page A1

a Lexus sedan, a Pajero and a nice mansion house in Baguio.

But on ordinary dreamer, the 30-year-old priest is working to get there.

Father Boting, the well-loved parish priest of Immaculate Trinidad in the City of Malolos, has been investing in the stock market for more than five years now.

He earnest he has not made a fortune out of his initial P8,000 investment. And he says he has no plans of building one, anyway.

"I just want to keep something for myself so I won't have to beg even for my basic needs," he says.

Not many people know about his "other work." But he's not actually keeping it a secret; he's just not volunteering the information.

Father Boting doesn't want to be condemned by those who believe that priests are not supposed to make money for themselves.

"It's discouraged," he says. "But there's really nothing wrong with it as long as it will not affect your primary duty as a priest."

Roadblock

Those who really know him do not doubt his loyalty to his vocation, except a group of elders at Sacristahan that has been trying to kick him out of the parish.

Father Boting considers them a roadblock to his ministry to the small city of what he considers intensely devout but at times misguided Catholics.

The Diocese of Malolos near the prior to translation in November 2000 to build a parish there. The number of parishioners has grown over the years. A chapel into no longer accommodates them.

"It was no easy task," Boting says. "Many people didn't want the idea. Before I arrived, six priests had tried to win. They all quit out of frustration."

He is up against several forms of Catholic "malpractice" deeply embedded among members, such as building a controlled penitent atop the altar on Good Friday. Neither is he in favor of people perfecting the "prayer" over blues.

Threats

Ever driven, Father Boting took everything as a challenge. The elders allegedly started sending him death threats, he said, almost.

He later confessed the owner of a nearby resort to donate a worn-out bowling center where the parish church now stands.

But the lot, it turned out, had been mortgaged to a woman banker. Her terms were close...pay P4 million or vacate out.

"I cried then," the priest recalls. "Where would I get the money? I even thought of selling my kidneys or an eye just to raise the amount."

He had pursued savings then, but they were definitely not enough to significantly reduce the mortgage.

Miracles

Then came what he calls a "series of miracles" from Santissima.

A woman offered to pay more than half of the lot. She told the parish miracles to just pay her back on their own terms.

The problem nearly solved, Father Boting mobilized the parishioners to raise the money to cover the balance.

He set up a program dividing the parish compound into several plots. People were urged to "buy" plots for P5,000 each, for which they would be given "heavenly reserve." Proceeds went to the parish.

Father Boting and other devotees also went around neighboring parishes to practically beg. He is optimistic they would soon pay the full P4 million.

Intense drive

To him, the battle is nearly won. And it would not have been so hard if not been for his narrow drive. To those who know him, that's vintage Boting.

He says the same attitude got him to lower records.

"It's really not about the money," he insists. "I used to prove that I can make something out of nothing, that something big can come out of something small if only you motivate it."

At first noticed his latest side drive for personal achievement is the stock market.

"When I was in the seminary, my classmates were very bright," he says. "I wanted to prove that I was also intelligent like them. I wanted to prove that I could get something just by thinking."

Later, he thought of gauging himself by trying to earn money by practically "doing anything."

Enter the stock market, an idea he got from a friend.

Father Boting has not been to the Philippine Stock Exchange and he would probably get lost there. He has not seen the broker he's been dealing with since the late 1990s. He only phones him from Malolos.

But he doesn't fool him on the he-and cons of investing in stocks. He knows which stock will most likely shoot up or plunge, depending on a political crisis, controversies or natural disaster. He knows the rules.

"When a economic hit South Asia, I knew tourism would move to the Philippines," he says. "So I bought stocks which I thought would sell at a much higher price once the foreigners start coming in."

Hope

One of Father Boting's most valued possessions is a ledger of all his stock market transactions. Written in bold letters on the cover is the title "Pag-asa ng Bukas" (Hope of Tomorrow).

"Hope, that's something nobody can take away from me," he says.

Hope and money reaped from investments allowed him to acquire a Honda Civic, a first look in the all-black hatchback parked in the church compound would make one think it belonged to a dashing bachelor, not to a middle-aged priest.

Visualization

The car began as a present he would only need at home he retired in the evening, a "visualization of dreams," he says.

"Somehow it's true that when you're really keen on achieving something, you have to keep your focus and you'll get it."

Right now, the object of his "focus" is a plastic-covered "collage of dreams" kept in his small room in the half-built parish compound.

On the lower fold are pictures of a BMW, a Lexus, a Pajero and a Baguio house...his temporal dreams. Above these are images of angels and the heavens—his spiritual dreams. In the middle is the Church, his vocation.

Father Boting said self when he'll get any of the cars in the house. He says he doesn't mind, really.

Knowing the things I've done, I'm ready to go," he says. "God can take me anytime and I won't have regrets. I know I've lived my life to the fullest. I've showed him how much I love Him through his chosen vocation."

Fortunately for Father Boting, his savings won't let him die a neglected pauper.

PR. VENTURA. "Boting" Bautista (just want to keep something for myself so I won't have to beg even for my basic needs.

RP tenor wins top prize at Met Opera

From page A1

screened the four winners chosen by a panel of judges.

Ramil's name was called, together with those of soprano Susan Phillips from Minneapolis, Minnesota; soprano Lauren Oropeza from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and bass Jordan Bisch from Vancouver, Washington.

The rules stated that contestants must be between the ages of 26 and 30 when they enter, and Ramil just made it under the wire, having turned 30 last year. The others were all in their early 20s.

Most unusual

Ramil, who comes from a musically inclined family, was described as the most unusual among the contestants. A clinician Ives Figaro who bills himself as a "classics tenor," he uses his compact body expertly to magnify the effect of his robust singing.

In his first selection, "Ecco ridente" from Gioachino's "Le Comte d'Ory," Ramil played the part of Count...a lord and doddering amorist, complete with rolled-over eyelids. His second choice was the baritone "Aria" from Gianfranco's "The Ghosts of Versailles," which had its world premiere in the 1980s.

Bisch has a bass voice of only modest size, but it goes remarkably deep and he uses it nicely because musicianship. He threw himself heartily into the comic villain Dmitri aria, "O mio sol ich scamplicavo" from Mussorgsky's "The Khovanshina and then broad," and then changed mood radically for the plummy operatics "Ah! tabor spit" from Rachmaninoff's "Aleko."

The two sopranos displayed voices of very different characters. Phillips has a generous lyric soprano that revealed in "In mezzo stare," the aria sung from Gounod's "Romeo et Juliette," drawing explosive applause from the audience. She followed with Donizetti's "Regnava nel silenzio," complete with floated high notes, of Puntina's heartbreaking "Ah, ch'ambla," from Mozart's "Cosi fan tutte."

With a voice small but pure, Oropeza etched a lovely line in "Batti, batti" from Mozart's "Don" She followed with a perky and polished performance of Poulenc's "Les voix pour lo" from Rossini's "Il Barbiere di Siviglia."

The four winners each got $15,000 toward their studies, the five others received $5,000 each. All nine finalists are eligible for consideration by the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, and several are likely to get an engagement there.

As Graham pointed out, the contest this year carries the names of 95 singers who took part in the auditions ready in their careers. Besides Ramil, they include soprano Ana Maria Martinez, who sang Gilda in Verdi's "Rigoletto" at the Philadelphia Opera; mezzo Stephanie Blythe and soprano Zajick, tenor Ben Heppner, baritone Thomas Hampson and bass Samuel Ramey.

The five finalists who didn't make it to the winner's circle on Sunday were augustus Matt Morley from Japan, Silvana Cruz from Albania, Ellie Dehn from Philadelphia, and tenor Michelle Loner and tenor Joseph Kaiser, both from Canada.

AP

Tourists here to see Pinoys crucify selves

From page A1

Tourists planning to have themselves crucified or whipped risk getting tetanus, an infection that could kill victims in a matter of hours, she said.

The official also warned people against jumping in rivers after they are crucified, in the belief that they would be cleansed of their sins.

Fear of infection

"Just imagine all the infectious agents in a river, not to mention those present in the nails and whips," Villa explained. "They're at risk for serious infection."

If penitents insist on being crucified or whipped, they should get the whip or nails properly sterilized, she said.

Alcohol wasn't be enough, Villa stressed.

After the rituals, penitents should see a competent doctor to assess their injuries, she said.

Villa also warned sportsmen—especially tourists—to protect themselves from sunburn, heatstroke and severe dehydration, "Be sure to drink lots of fluids," she said.

Adventure seekers

Adele Anne Lenore Arnado, the information booth at the Xiao resort area provides assistance to tourists who come to the country without a definite itinerary but are eager to have an adventure.

Among the Philippine festivals popular with tourists are the Panagbenga in Baguio City and the Sinulog in Cebu, Rincobo said.

The DOT used to give tourists inquiring at the information center a booklet that listed all of the Philippine festivals.

However, Rincobo said his colleagues lamented, the booklet is out of print.

Aside from Philippine festivals, tourists frequently inquire about the beaches, Rincobo said. The DOT, of course, recommends Boracay in Aklan and Puerto Galera in Mindoro.

European, Japanese and Scandinavian are the bulk of tourists coming to the Philippines, Rincobo said.

Japanese tourists often proceed to Cebu because they are also interested in Japanese opportunities there, Rincobo said. On the other hand, those the opposite Dos Palmas and El Nido resorts in Palawan.

Is it safe?

European backpackers would sometimes ask where they could go trekking or mountain climbing. Luneta is a favorite destination, where they would stay for a week or two, exploring villages and getting to know the local culture, Rincobo said.

Years ago, tourists would not inquire about safety and security, Rincobo noted.

"But now it's the next thing they ask: Is it safe in Manila?" he said, adding that many tourists are usually more afraid of staying in Metro Manila than in the provinces.

Usually, Rincobo said, he would encourage tourists to stay overnight in Metro Manila to get a feel of the capital, and then decide if they want to stay longer or move on to other parts of the country.

SAUDI Minister Ali Bin Ibrahim Al-Naimi, President Arroyo, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez and then Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla (from left) talk at the Lotilla residence in Makati during...

RP can't expect Saudi oil discount

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

IT'S STRICTLY business for the world's biggest oil producer, Iran, & Arabia, which will not sell its prized commodity at a discount even to developing countries like the Philippines.

Visiting Saudi Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali Bin Ibrahim Al-Naimi yesterday said world crude oil prices were too high for his country could not do anything to ease pressures if it raised its output.

After a luncheon meeting with President Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang, Al-Naimi met with reporters in a briefing where he cited Saudi leaders's concern for developing countries in keeping with its moderate mind-weighted objectives.

"We seek a reasonable price for the oil producers and the consumer and ensure that world economic growth is not negatively impacted, particularly the economic growth of developing nations," said Al-Naimi, who took note of the "strong relationship" between Saudi Arabia and the Philippines as evidenced by Saudi Aramco's 40 percent stake in the country's biggest oil refiner Petron Corp.

But when asked if Saudi leaders gave discounts based on its cozy ties to developing countries and its "special relationship" with the Philippines, Al-Naimi bluntly said: "There are no discounts anywhere in the world. This is an international oil market and as far as I know nobody is discounting."

Al-Naimi made the comment just a few minutes after President Arroyo profusely thanked Saudi Arabia for "doing everything within its power to keep the price of oil down."

In her speech, the President told Al-Naimi informed him that, "the next highness, the king of Saudi Arabia, gave specific instructions to ensure that developing countries like the Philippines did not suffer from high oil prices."

The President also praised Saudi Arabia for resisting an easing of production among Opec member countries. But Al-Naimi told reporters that while Saudi Arabia found oil prices too high and it wanted prices to go down, an increasing production was not the answer.

"We would be very happy to sell 11 million barrels per day today rather than 9.6 million. Do we have a customer? The answer is yes, if we have a customer. The fact that the price is on the increase has many different underlyings to it. There is a perception in the market that there will be shortage of supply in the immediate future. I have tried to dispel that notion," Al-Naimi said. "I believe the actual production is probably already higher to meet the growing demand from Europe."

Al-Naimi, who is also chair of Saudi Aramco, also said that while he did not agree with the proposal for the government to impose control of futures, Saudi Aramco would oblige by selling in scale.

"If the government of the Philippines believes buying back 40 percent is an investment, we shall like a further 6 dividends of earnings," added. "Arbitrate said "Decisions of government are sovereign, and they do not impact on relationships between countries and countries."

Solon wants envoys' heads for failing to help OFWs

AMADWIN parts for Rep. Crispin Beltran yesterday called for the suspension of Philippine Embassy officials in Jordan for their alleged failure to negotiate at least 50 abused overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

Beltran said in a statement that Philippine Ambassador to Jordan Rigoberto Tarue and three other officials should be suspended and investigated for allegedly ordering OFWs—who had fled from their employers due to abuse—to return to their overseas agencies in Jordan if they could not pay their deployment and repatriation expenses.

"These officials should be investigated, but prior to the investigations, they should also be suspended from duty," said Beltran, chairman of the House committee on labor and employment.

He stated that at least ten Filipino workers were found to return to their abusive recruitment agencies the month although the government had a P1.00 million Assistance to Nationals (ATN) fund which covers the repatriation of OFWs.

Beltran said that the 50 or so OFWs who wanted to be repatriated included two pregnant women and a rape victim.

"It's appalling that the Philippine Embassy and the DFA (Department of Foreign Affairs), despite the existence of the ATN fund (...) continue to refuse the distressed Filipino workers' repatriation requests," he said.

Besides Tarue, the other erring officials were Consul Jun Amorado, embassy administrative officer Raimundo Nonnenkamp and welfare officer Evelyn Linsangan Beltran said.

Beltran said abused OFWs who had been repatriated to the country blamed these officials for ordering other OFWs to return to their abusive employers in Jordan.

He said the officials violated the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Act of 1995 which mandates that the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration personnel on the ground, in coordination with the DFA, should repatriate workers who are "in need and without means." (Philip C. Tubeza)

GMA rushes VAT bill approval

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doubt whether they would pass the VAT measure during the three-day special session.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said it would be unwise of Malacañang to press for the passage of the VAT amendments at the expense of substantive debates.

"At least three senators—Joker Arroyo, Manuel Villar and myself—in Filipino! Ji—said the VAT bill should be tackled during the resumption of the regular session on April 11.

Senate President Pro Tempore Defensor said only five senators would be allowed, leaving 18 available to attend the special session. He said the presence of 14 senators would constitute a quorum.

The Senate can muster a quorum as it is the constitutional duty of 16 members to attend a special session called by the President of the Republic, according to Pangilinan.

"However, even if we pass the VAT during the three-day special session as expressed by Malacañang, it would be unwise to do so," Pangilinan said in a statement.

Haste makes waste

Pangilinan and senator-candidate Arroyo would be unbidden whether Congress passed the measures in three days or in three weeks.

"Some of the senators need more time to debate the merits. They are no problem in passing the VAT bill [until April]," he said. "We understand them."

Sen. Ralph Recto, chair of the Senate ways and means committee, sponsor of the bill, earlier doubted the chamber would pass the measure even with a special session.

Asked about the chances of the bill being approved, Recto said: "It is possible that we will not approve it. It is possible that it will be approved."

Enrile said five senators will be out of the country during the special session—Pia Cayetano, Gregorio Honasan, Lito Lapid, Loi Estrada, Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. and Manuel Villar. Villar is travelling in Japan and narrowly missed the front of here will be in the United States.

Defense said Sen. Richard Gordon was absent but would come back for the special session.

Senate sources said only eight senators had confirmed their attendance in the special session—Enrile, Pangilinan, Recto, Miriam Defensor Santiago, Arroyo, Ralph Recto and Edgardo Angara.

Sen. John Ilarion said on Saturday he would attend the session.

He reiterated in his statement that the Senate leadership will not be distracted from the basic task of delivering P60 billion," Sulenda said. "We expect Congress to deliver a credible VAT within April." With a report from Philip C. Tubeza

Not a total setback

In the House of Representatives, Assistant Majority Leader Antonio Griffin said Defensor should be aware if the Senate believes "that its job" during the special session.

Griffin said House Majority Leader Princess Hegedito said in a statement that the senators, if they wanted to, could "just approve" the House version of the VAT bill. "But what they did with the 2009 national budget."

"If the Senate leadership cannot lead the majority into supporting an important revenue measure of the President, then Global can rallies join the opposition or resign from his post," Griffin said.

Although a disappointment, the delay in approving the VAT was not overwhelmed, Salonga said.

"Both military may present benefit, our constituency as it allows the reforming mood of the Senate to a 12-person VAT to flourish, it would prevent a protracted impasse over the bicameral conference and it would minimize the potential for a Supreme Court petition for a temporary restraining order," said Salonga, an economic adviser of the President.

"One step back, two steps forward. Readers will grants in development spending, infrastructure will not be distracted from the basic task of delivering P60 billion," Sulenda said. "We expect Congress to deliver a credible VAT within April." With a report from Philip C. Tubeza

Militants slam TV ad spots on VAT hike

By Norman Bordadora

ATHENS Union organizing—for Manuel Pangalan's Monday eve, leaders of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan were watching with the airing of every ad spot declaring the merits of a higher value-added tax (VAT) on imported items RP9-5, which showed the Bilibinos hosts right with Mercado Isla Morales.

"I don't know which was worse, Pangalan being interviewed by Mercado or Mercado trying to make us the people through the use of packaged lies and deceit," Bayan secretary general Renato M. Reyes Jr. said.

"The lies peddled during the commercial breaks were insulting to say the least," Reyes said.

The advertisements, which tried to show the virtues of the proposal to raise the VAT rate from 10 percent to 12 percent, were aired on RP9-5 during a scheduled hiatus in the coverage of the militant-watched fight between the Filipino boxer and the Mexican slugger.

One advertisement showed pop-star Sarah Geronimo, who was wearing a blue shirt, saying that she supported the adoption of an expanded VAT. Another ad said a higher VAT rate would only affect luxury items and not basic commodities.

"It's not true that the VAT would only affect luxury items. Many of the current proposals also call for imposing a VAT on electricity and petroleum products," Reyes said.

Bayan Muna Rep. Teddy Casiño said the ads, which he described as "cute and good-looking," were designed to "subliminally elicit acceptance" of the proposed VAT hike by manipulating their prime goods would not be hit by a higher VAT rate.

"The main reason the measure met fierce opposition in the House was because it was not clear to the people how the additional revenues would be used," Casiño said in a statement.

Reyes also questioned the propriety of producing and airing the VAT ads, which he said violated the commercials' personality as the organs of the government.

"It was not clear, however, if the commercials aired on TV were commissioned or paid for by the government or were merely run as regular ads," Reyes said. "If they are regular ads and of every commercial, Bill, [was] could only suspect that it was the government that paid for the TV ads," Reyes said.

He questioned the propriety of producing and airing the half-hour ads when the government was already in bad fiscal shape.

Government data media chief Gregg Bonsodo said the government did not spend a single centavo for the series of infomercials.

"As Bayan has the right to attack government, the latter has also the right to save every thing in its means to put its message across," said Bonsodo, a former chair of the Bayanihan ng Bukluran ng Pilipino. With reports from GM C. Cabacungan Jr. in Manila and Delpin C. Shallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Hero's welcome awaits Pacquiao despite defeat

Front page B1

quite losing to Mexican Erik Morales in Las Vegas. Prize boxer Ignacio Rumit said yesterday.

"Our admiration for Manny is undiminished. He showed the fighting spirit of the Filipino people," Rumit said of a game boxing.

"A weak-hearted boxer fighting with one eye would have given up easily, but not Manny, who fought to the end. He showed the true heart of a warrior."

Aside of Malacañang planned a hero's welcome for Pacquiao, Rumit said Tuesday, defeated.

He said President Benigno Aquino considered the boxer an authentic Filipino sports hero.

"The Palace will always be open to Pacquiao and we're prepared to [accept] him at his return," he said. "Manny deserves a welcome for the fighter he is," Rumit said, adding that a warm welcome for the pugilist was only fitting.

"We can't say only at the time of [his] victory, with the exception of Rodey Mercado, ruined defeat at one minute earlier," said Rumit, citing heavyweight boxing legends Muhammad Ali and Joe Louis as among those who suffered defeat to enhance their glory.

"We believe that Manny will bounce back from this defeat and he will go on to greater heights," Rumit said.

Tanjuatan Secretary Joseph Ace Durano has not received word as when Pacquiao will come home but said his office expected meeting with the boxer's managers and other private entities upon his return.

"We prepare a welcome for him."

The Pinoy Squire Association at airport will be decorated for Pacquiao's arrival, with Durano heading government officials in greeting the fighter.

Durano said he would escort Pacquiao to Malacañang for the meeting with the heroes.

The boxer was also expected to do so working with the local government and with civic groups in General Santos City to "make its hometown stream something he will never forget," Durano said.

The debate to Morales may have cast a pall of gloom on the country, but it also drew the attention of lawmakers to the plight of the country's professional boxers.

Caring for the boxers

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago filed a bill requiring the Games and Amusements Board to provide professional boxers with insurance coverage for any injuries sustained during matches.

"While most boxing organizations may have already incorporated the [basic health and safety] requisites in their own charters, it is important that our government also [assume] responsibility in ensuring the safety of our boxers by enacting a law that will widely cover their interests," Santiago said in a statement.

"Many of our countrymen have made the nation proud by becoming world champions. It is high time we look after their welfare."

Blood sport

Santiago, whose husband Narciso was a boxer in college, said she watched Saturday's fight on television and was impressed by Pacquiao's gallantry.

In Senate Bill No. 1021, Santiago said boxing, being a blood sport, should be subject to government regulation and safety standards.

Under Santiago's proposal, a professional boxing match would be stopped only if a licensed practicing physician, whose services were paid for by the promoter, was present to stop it.

The promoter should also make sure an ambulance is on standby the sidelines.

Lure of money

The bill would also mandate promotion to subject boxers to a physical examination by a licensed practicing physician before a fight.

"I have three sons in boxing, especially those who are just starting out on their careers, who will participate in a match, even if they're not in the top rings because they are thinking of the money to invest their families," Santiago said.

"The is very dangerous. A loser is endangers his health if he is not in perfect physical condition."

Any manager, promoter, matchmaker or boxer who violates the proposed law's provisions faces one-year imprisonment or a fine of up to P100,000, or both, she said.

No more Nazarenus

Santiago also asked Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas to study the feasibility of a national pension system for professional boxers.

"We don't want the future Manny Pacquiaos of this country to end up, when they retire, like Rolando Navarrete, who is now living in poverty," she said.

Santiago was referring to the former World Boxing Council junior lightweight champion, who years while retailer. With reports from TJ Burgonio and Jerome Aning

MANNY Pacquiao preps in a corner of the ring after losing the super featherweight bout to Erik Morales of Mexico at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas AFP/EPA

Library rescues works of women writers

Front page B1

ner to a new generation of writers, especially the women, who were in search of role models.

Allowa came to be when Hinduja complained to Reyes that she could not find "enough three meter sheet Manobang slaves, da."

The solution is her boldness that "without documents, in history exists."

"If there are no records of what you've achieved, you don't exist," Manobang said, citing the head of directors of Allowa said. "We may make an effort to collect while these writers are still alive or later, but the records get lost. If Reyes, Jose of Angela Manalang Gloria, not much more for so many others, we're not home know Angela!"

It is Hinduja that Reyes was crying need "to salvage materials before they're lost to termites, floodwaters, fire—in some some other disaster."

So she contemplated a place "where women writers can be received, treasured, curated and [taken] out into dusting papers for the use of scholars and readers."

Together with Reyes, Hinduja broached the idea to Benilda Lumanog, their former academic colleague.

At the time, Hinduja said, the university did not [and still does not] have a women's studies center.

"So my orders would be to organize committee to that field," Manobang said. "We were are about to compare with the women's studies centers of other schools. He wanted to complement them in the way special satisfied."

Manobang the Senate for "setting the vision, shaping it and literally getting at it room of our own" on the third floor of the Rizal Library on the Diliman campus at Leopold Hughes, Quezon City.

Expansion

The room has since expanded to three, to include a reading room, a reception room and an archival section that houses on computer shelves the print materials of (at last count) 161 Filipino women.

The archives are temperature- and humidity-controlled.

The archival staff treats the documents with acid-free boxes that prevent disintegration. They are also stored in non-reactive, digitized and photocopied.

The original copies may be consulted upon request, but if the researcher wants to handle them, she gets only to be photocopies.

Among the most notable women represented are Estrella Alfon, Francisca Aldaba, Edgardo Arellano, Bienvenida Lumbera, Lilia Quindoza Santiago, Rosa Linda Bautista, Pat Marquez Benitez, Imelda Cajipe-Endaya, Gilda Cordero-Fernando, Kerima Lucman-Dema, Edilberto Tiempo, Perla Cruz, Gabriela Tingia, Jessica Hagedorn, Ma. Rosa Lanot Bonoan, Lorna Kalaw Tirol, Bobbie Malay, Marjorie Evasco, Amanda Aguinaldo-Manguerra, Luna Sicat Cleto, Rebecca Tinio, Patricia Evangelista, Arsenia Polotan, Marichu Maceda, Mary Soo Hee Tagle, Edith Tiempo, Trinidad Tarrosa Subido, Doris Brainard, Linda Ty-Casper, Sylvia M. Mendoza and Isabel Cruz Villaseñor.

In fits and starts

Hinduja said that with more, the creation of their library is a series of achievements.

"Gradually, organize—they always keep documents of their works constantly. But women don't follow metric trajectory," she said, adding:

"We move in fits and starts. When we receive grants, short stories, drama, fiction—are out of our public record. Women tend to denigrate their own work. There's nonacidity self-effacing although they keep the report cards of their children and the condolence of their husbands, but none of their own works. They dismiss their works as a pastime or hobby."

"They often women artists don't take themselves seriously enough to document their works, so that's what Allowa does. Give us the documents, and we will keep and categorize them. Donate to us, and we provide a service by way of thanks, and this is to identify, catalogue, provide photocopies of works, they're forgotten," she said.

'I'm dying'

Hinduja cited the case of the late Bobbie Malay, Bayan Muna's. They got to a box filled with things, and Hinduja told her about Allowa.

One day Hinduja got a call and on the other line, Bobbie said: "Edna, I'm dying. If you want any of my works, you have to get them now. I'm leaving for Cebu tomorrow."

Briefly, Hinduja grabbed a cab that brought her to Bobbie's Alabang house, where she saw about four boxes on the floor.

Bobbie had a small computer storage from the world and studies and told Hinduja to: "Take them."

A year and half later, in a few months before Bobbie died, Hinduja was able to complete and release a biography titled "Bobbie Malay: A story of Lapiang Manok's Life and Selected Works."

Hinduja said she was able to do it "because the materials were there."

When she tries to persuade women writers and artists to donate their papers, Hinduja tells them: "Imagine, 100 years from now, someone would like to write your biography. What materials—letters, journals, photographs, notes—would [a biographer] find useful to her/him to write a comprehensive and accurate biography?"

Social capital

Allowa's result, however, cannot be sustained without the help of sponsors and friends.

Even as its 10th year, it formed the Friends of Allowa, who were invited [to]. "We are not like any money-fest your social capital—[meaning] connections and network).

In 2008, Allowa opened itself to include women in the visual arts through a generous grant from the Ayala Foundation.

Then the [Ayala Museum] formed the Foundation based Blanquiz raised seed [to Allowa's mission and vision. In 2009, P50,000 is not enough. I'll give you P500,000."

And [we promptly sent the check, which because part of Allowa's endowment that has allowed it to house in the past few years outstanding women artists Rosa Ingal, Julie Lluch, Araceli Dans, Imee Ilo and Pacita Abad.

"Our current donor pool and her P1 million for Allowa to continue its work.

The executive of Ingal's will announced that the painter's papers would be turned over to Allowa. Ingal's artist Ilo Ilano, who is writing her biography, discovered among the papers the only sheet were Ingal's recipe.

As Hinduja described it, "It's a list of ingredients for [Ingal's] delicious pancakes."

Ingal's skin ego, sometimes love for her art."

Dark glasses

Allowa holds one exception with regard to the donation of items in the size of the [Ayala] senior Rosario de Guzman Lingat, a public diva] most writer and activist, who was detained Lingat's] my daughter's] "true writer."

She said Lingat's wife [holding brand] in her hand, her pulled-[upland forest] her to wear dark glasses whenever she went so that no one could look into her eyes.

Lingat's children donated the [Ayala] museum, and Hinduja accepted them because in her, they were symbolic of "how the patriarchy not only obsesses but also [denies] women."

BITTER CROSS TO BEAR
A farmer is tied to a cross of sugarcane stalks in a protest staged by Hacienda Luisita farmers at the Commission on Human Rights in Quezon City yesterday. The farmers were protesting the breakdown in CBA talks with the sugar plantation's owners and the continuing violence being committed against them. EDD CASTRO

DSWD helps Bohol folk cope

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE AGRICULTURE as well as the parents of the 27 children who died after eating poisoned cassava in Mabini, Bohol, nine months ago are undergoing stress counseling to help them cope with the traumatic experience.

Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman told a press conference that social workers had been conducting two debriefings a day after the residents and parents were diagnosed to be suffering from trauma.

"Our stress debriefers are conducting sessions in two batches—for mothers and students. It was a very traumatic experience for them. The students are fearful and cautious [after] eating their refreshments during [debriefing]," Soliman said.

She said it would take some time before the children's behavior would return to normal.

At least 27 children died and 103 others, mostly aged seven to 13, were hospitalized after eating contaminated cassava that had been mixed with pesticide.

At first, the poisoning was blamed on the cassava consumed by the victims but this was ruled out following autopsies conducted by the National Bureau of Investigation on the bodies of some victims.

Two more cassava cases identified as having sold the cassava to the children. One is in the hospital after the consumed her own snacks while the other is under NBI custody to protect her from the ire of the children's parents.

Soliman said the social workers had to wait until the survivors of those who died had settled down before beginning the debriefings. For the students, the Department of Social Welfare and Development has scheduled a "whole summer" of coping sessions through play therapy.

Sen. Ahmad Udtog Matalam, who said authorities should make a public statement about whether or not cassava is safe to eat.

Villar, vice chair of the Senate agriculture and food committee, said the public deserved to know the real score after the poisoning incident in Bohol.

"I think the health and food authorities should settle the score regarding the edibility of cassava. We should once and for all quell the speculations regarding this staple food of Filipinos," Villar said in a statement.

Villar said that so far, only the NBI had "absolved cassava as the culprit" in the death of the schoolchildren who ate cassava for merienda.

The NBI said the children died after ingesting an organo-phosphate insecticide called coumaphos that had been mixed into the cassava cooked by a vendor. The NBI found a can of the pesticide in the vendor's kitchen and traces of it in the frying pan she had used. With Julie Ladaga, Jaya Bacani

Mining insurance sought

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE DENR-EMB of Environment and Natural Resources wants foreign mining firms to set aside money for an insurance fund(s) that would pay for damages that could result from their operations in the country.

Environment Secretary Michael Defensor said the insurance (liability fund) would be like a remediation fund, except that it would compel mining companies to pay for the insurance premium for the seven years of operations.

"The only the insurance agent is the government representing the beneficiaries. When there is environmental problems, the money can be used for rehabilitation during the mine's operation," Defensor said in a phone interview yesterday.

The remediation fund requires mining companies only on their last year of operations, with many firms using bankruptcy or loss petitions to avoid any responsibility.

Defensor acknowledged that there was no provision in the Mining Act of 1995 creating an insurance liability fund.

He said the DENR was studying the formation of this, which forces the insurance on the life of the mining exploration and operations and the company's projected profit.

Environmental lawyers, meanwhile, are drafting a bill which they are pushing as an amendment to the Mining Act. The bill, which has more emphasis on social acceptability, is expected to be filed in Congress by June.

The Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC), which sponsored the amendments to certain provisions in the Mining Act of 1995 before the Supreme Court, is identifying allies in Congress who would push for the support of the bill and support the alternative bill.

Herbert Anastacio, LRC coordinator for Luzon, said the LRC had already conducted consultations in communities affected by mining operations.

The LRC has been in Barobo (Surigao), Zamboanga and South Cotabato for the ecozones focus. It would also hold dialogues in Palawan, Marco Mororo, Mindoro and Mindanao.

"The Mining Act of 1995 lacks provisions that pinpoint the responsibility for any damage done during mining operations," Anastacio said.

Defensor said The proposed editorial in Mining Act could create a mechanism that would make foreign exporters sought in to be right mining companies accountable for any damage caused by mining operations.

"Besides the environmental clearance certificate, we should also hold their exports accountable. They should not just take the government's promises of an EIC (environment compliance certificate) as an excuse for failures," Defensor said in a phone interview.

Within the year, the DENR will come up with an administrative order creating the insurance fund and a mechanism that will make foreign mining companies accountable, according to Defensor.

Government officials and businessmen have been on various trade shows abroad, promoting the Philippines as a country rich in mineral deposits valued at P47 trillion.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, March 22, 2005
Tuesday of Holy Week

1st Reading: Is 49:1-6
Gospel: John 13:21-33, 36-38

Incline, as ashe with his disciples. Jesus was distressed in spirit and said plainly, "Truly, one of you will betray me." The disciples then looked at one another, wondering who he meant. One of the disciples, the one Jesus loved, was reclining near Jesus, so Simon Peter signaled him to ask Jesus whom he meant.

And the disciple who was reclining next to Jesus asked him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It will be a piece of bread I dip in the dish, and he to whom I give it, is the one."

As Jesus dipped the bread and gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And as Judas took the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus then said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."

None of the others reclining at table understood why Jesus said this to Judas. As he had the common purse, they may have thought that Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or, "Give something to the poor." Judas left as soon as he had eaten the bread. It was night.

When Judas had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. God will glorify him, and he will glorify him very soon.

My children, I am with you for only a little while; you will look for me, but, as I already told the Jews, so now I tell you, where I am going you cannot come.

Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but afterwards you will." Peter said, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I am ready to give my life for you." Jesus answered, "So you are ready to give me? Truly

SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

GENERAL LAW GOVERNS PROCEEDINGS.—Jurisdiction over questioned cases.—The regular courts have not lost jurisdiction over the subject matter of the simple expulsion of a party causing or allowing the use by alleged possession of a tenancy relationship between the parties. But it is the duty of the court to receive evidence to determine the allegations of Section 22, all in Section, Summary Act. In fact, been shown to be the real issue, the court should dismiss the case for lack of jurisdiction. The nature of an action and the jurisdiction of it initial are determined by the material allegations of the complaint and the law in the case the action was commenced. Jurisdiction of the tribunal over the subject matter or nature of an action is conferred only by law and not by the consent or waiver upon a court which, otherwise, would have no jurisdiction over the subject matter or nature of an action. Lack of jurisdiction of the court over an action or the subject matter of an action cannot be cured by the silence, acquiescence, or even by express consent of the parties. If the court has no jurisdiction over the nature of an action, it may dismiss the same at any stage of the proceedings.

A decision of the court without jurisdiction is null and void; hence, it could never legally become final and executory. Such a judgment may be attacked directly or collaterally. [Education Assistance Center, Inc., Second Division, Gonzales vs. Medialdea, G. R. No. 149973, November 11, 2004]

B.D. R. Vitug

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Gozon

Annan offers sweeping UN reforms, changes to int'l security system

UNITED NATIONS—UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on Sunday unveiled his blueprint for sweeping changes to the United Nations and the international system of security in place since World War II.

Driven in part by the bitter divisions over the US-led war in Iraq, which he said had brought the world to a crossroads, Annan proposed a vast overhaul that he wants national leaders to agree on this year.

Annan's report outlines widen the membership of the Security Council, the UN's top organ for international security, and asks it to fix guidelines that would determine when coalitions may legally go to war.

It asks nations to agree on a proposed definition of terrorism, which has been disputed for decades, establish a new human rights council and commit to institution goals on development, disarmament and building democracy.

"In an era of global interdependence, the gloss of common interest, if properly perceived, should bind all more together in this room, as should the mandates of our common humanity," Annan said in the report.

"After a period of difficulty in international affairs, in the face of both new threats and old ones in new guises, there is a yearning in many quarters for a new consensus on which to base collective action," the UN chief said.

"This is a deal that the secretary general is offering the world," the unit's chief-of-staff Mark Malloch Brown told reporters at UN headquarters in New York.

"It's not an a la carte package," Malloch Brown said. "We believe the whole thing has to hold together."

World leaders will hold a summit here in September, by which time Annan is hoping that most of the changes —including those contentious issues that have dotted agreements for years —will be incorporated.

"If it doesn't come in a final fly that (summit), the fear is that it just drifts into another period without a deadline," Malloch Brown said.

The major changes would have to be agreed by two-thirds of the UN's 191 member states and as well as by the five veto-wielding permanent Security Council members—Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

It remains unclear how much political will exists for substantive change but Malloch Brown insisted that momentum has been growing for sweeping reform of the international system.

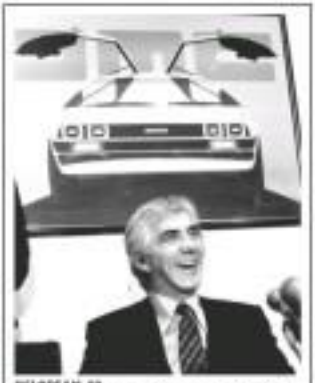
"I think there is a huge support for the idea that it's time for a bold and practical deal of this kind," Malloch Brown said.

Annan put forward two options for expanding Security Council membership from the current 15 to 24 nations —one of which would add new permanent members—and called for the creation of a peace building commission.

He also issued a call for a new human rights council to be elected by member states as part of an overall bid to strengthen development, health and rights are essential factors in the freedom and security of peoples and nations. AFP

EYEBALL TO EYEBALL

Photographers take pictures of South Korean Marines in the landing operation during a joint US-South Korea military exercise called "Foal Eagle" at Pohang beach, 400 km southeast of Seoul, March 11. Thousands of American and South Korean troops kicked off a joint military exercise last week after North Korea denounced the maneuvers as a rehearsal for a US-led preemptive attack on the isolated communist state. AFP



DELOREAN, 80

John DeLorean answers reporters' questions in New York on Feb. 15, 1982. DeLorean, an innovative auto executive who left a promising career in Detroit, Michigan, to develop the short-lived gull-winged sports cars featured in a stopped-up time travel machine in the "Back to the Future" movies, has died. He was 80. —

Iraq, Jordan withdraw ambassadors

BAGHDAD—Iraq and Jordan engaged in a tit-for-tat withdrawal of ambassadors in a growing disagreement over Qatar Muslim claims that Jordan is failing to block terrorist incursions during Iraq, while US forces killed 24 insurgents in a clash south of Baghdad.

An American survey was traveling through the Salman Pak area, 30 km southeast of Baghdad, when it was attacked, US officials said. Six soldiers and seven militants were wounded.

Sunday's diplomatic row erupted even as a Jordanian court sentenced to absentia Iraq's most famed terrorist—who was born in Jordan—to a 15-year prison term.

At news emerged of the largely symbolic withdrawings of Abu Hamad al-Zangana, Jordan's absent-yet-unknown, his al-Qaida in Iraq organization claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb-ing that killed a top antiterrorist police official in the northern city of Irbid. Al-Zangana already has been sentenced to death twice by Jordan.

Sunday's events capped a week of ending tensions that included a gesture of goodwill by Amman that Iraq's flag over the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad and claims by the Shiite clergy-backed United Iraqi Alliance that Jordan was allowing terrorists to slip into Iraq. The Iraqi standard continued to flutter above the Jordanian Embassy on Monday.

"Iraq and Jordan are better now than what happened. We decided, as the Iraqi government, to recall the Iraqi ambassador from Amman to discuss this," Foreign Minister Hashem Zebari said.

Jordan acted first, when Foreign Minister Hani al-Mulqi announced his charge d'affaires in Baghdad had been recalled to Amman.

Zebari ran into the theater he organized by Palestinian Yasir Arafat's Fatah subunit in the capital Jordan.

"[I] will do all to its ability to ensure safety for all employees and family members," and a means to end similar ones must be found, he said.

It said QF was in contact with the authorities and the "situation is being closely monitored and is under control."

Al-Jad worked in the information technology department of the energy firm since 1995. His colleagues said.

"Nobody suspected this from him. He was a decent man and just had a baby a month ago," one colleague told Reuters. "He was not a loner, but he was not the most sociable person." Reuters

Qatar bomber worked at state energy company

DOHA—An Egyptian suicide bomber who attacked a theater in Qatar, killing a Briton, was employed at state-run Qatar Petroleum, company sources said on Monday.

A QP official told Reuters the company, which runs Qatar's rich oil and gas sector, was boosting security but there was no fear of safety after Saturday's car bomb blast which also injured 16 people.

QP sources said it was business as usual as oil and gas installations in Qatar pumps 800,000 barrels of oil a day and is among the world's top natural gas suppliers.

The Qatari Interior Ministry identified Egyptian Omar Ahmad Abdullah Ali as the suicide attacker who rammed an explosive-laden car into the theater frequented by Westerners near a British school in the capital Doha.

"QP will do all to its ability to ensure safety for all employees and family members," and a means to end similar ones must be found, he said.

It said QP was in contact with the authorities and the "situation is being closely monitored and is under control."

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Malaysia must reduce dependence on foreign workers, king tells solons

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia must reduce its dependence on foreign workers, King Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin said Monday amid an acute labor shortage created by a crackdown that sent thousands of illegal workers fleeing the country.

"We are very worried with the large number of foreign workers in the country," the country's ceremonial leader told the opening of a new session to parliament.

"Measures have to be taken to lessen our dependency on them in various sectors. We must train Malaysians to be self-reliant," the king said.

A crackdown on illegal immigrants which began this month has left industries with crippling labor shortages. About 200,000 workers are reportedly needed in the manufacturing sector, 150,000 in construction, 50,000 in plantations and 20,000 in the services sector.

The labor crunch follows the departure during a three-month amnesty programme which ended on March 1 of nearly 400,000 illegal immigrants, mostly from Indonesia but also from the Philippines, Burma (also known as Myanmar), Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka.

The country's dependence on foreign workers would be reduced by "enhancing automation to work processes and attracting locals to work in sectors which have been dominated all this while by foreign workers," the king said.

"Measures to overcome the problems of illegal immigrants will without doubt be more effective if enforcement is undertaken by the relevant agencies in a more coordinated manner," he added.

The king also pledged that Malaysia would continue an anti-corruption drive launched by Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi when he took over from former premier Dr. Mahathir Mohamad in October 2003.

While Malaysia has "accomplished numerous successes in combating corruption, we must not be consumed with what we have accomplished," he said.

"The punitive approach of enforcement and the punishments imposed on those found guilty of corruption continues to be implemented," he said. AFP

A MALAYSIAN soldier dressed in Malay traditional warrior costume waits before the opening of the second session of 11th Parliament in Kuala Lumpur March 21. —

Sci-fi author Jules Verne feted 100 years after death

PARIS—In 1872, French author Jules Verne sent one of his greatest heroes, British adventurer Phileas Fogg, around the world in 80 days—an amazing feat given the modes of transportation available at the time.

On March 3, US astronaut Steve Fossett completed the first solo flight around the world without refueling in three days, last week, French sailor Bruno Peyron made the trip by boat in 50 days, winning the ... Jules Verne trophy.

One hundred years after the death of the French writer, known worldwide for his fantastic tales of underwater exploration and space travel, technology may have far eclipsed his own experiences, but not what he saw in his imagination.

"He was fascinated by progress and he depicted it in his works," says Didier Ferrandez, the curator of an exhibition celebrating Verne's life at the Maritime Museum in Paris, one of a series of events marking the centenary of his death.

From Paris to the western city of Nantes, where Verne was born on Feb. 8, 1828, to the seaside town of Amiens, where he died on March 24, 1905, Jules will be feted in exhibits, concerts, films and shows in his honor.

Verne ranks among the world's 10 most translated authors, along with William Shakespeare and Vladimir Lenin, according to Unesco. His cyberspace book, and is revered by fans who have launched clubs around the world.

Many of Verne's works, like his famed "20,000 Leagues Under The Sea," evoke unusual routes and voyages to far off islands. The boat enthusiast, who owned three yachts in his lifetime, once said: "The need to sail consumed me."

Half of his novels feature the sea as a significant way," explains Jean-Paul Dekiss, director of the International Jules Verne Center in Amiens.

"The sea is the principal metaphor for characters and the possibility of judging groups of human beings in microcosm. The sea, for him, is infinity, infinite freedom."

Verne was first inspired to write his tales of adventure and travel lands during his childhood in Nantes, when he spent countless hours watching boats go up and down the Loire.

In 1848, Verne left for Paris, where his father hoped he would study law. But he instead was quickly drawn into the literary world, going to the theater to applaud the works of Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo and Alfred de Musset.

Two years later, he made his writing debut and never looked back, describing his work as the "source of the only true happiness."

He wrote novels, plays, news articles, poems, essays and short stories. He won Dumas and employer Jacques Arago, but it was his encounter with publisher Pierre-Jules Hetzel that transformed his life.

Verne, who had accepted a job at the Paris stock exchange, resigned in 1862 to focus on his "Extraordinary Journeys," a series that included the tales of Captain Nemo and Phileas Fogg, as well as "A Journey to the Center of the Earth" and "From the Earth to the Moon." AFP

Amid controversy, Bush signs bill to save Schiavo

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush early Monday put his signature to controversial legislation designed to prolong the life of a severely brain-damaged Florida woman whose feeding tube has been removed by court order.

"Today I signed into law a bill that will allow Federal courts to hear a directive or on behalf of Terri Schiavo for violations of her rights relating to the withholding or withdrawal of food, fluids, or medical treatment necessary to sustain her life," Bush said in a statement.

"It raises like this one, where there are serious questions and substantial doubts, one worthy, one have, and our court should have a presumption in favor of life."

The US Congress gave its final approval to the bill shortly after midnight and it was rushed to the White House for Bush's signature.

The president, who fled town at his Texas ranch and has further business in that part of the country later Monday, returned to Washington on Sunday specifically to sign the bill.

With few Democrats walking to join out what could be interpreted as a death sentence, the House of Representatives voted 203-58 to hand over the fate of 41-year-old Schiavo, who has been in a persistent vegetative state for the past 15 years, to a federal court.

The Senate unanimously passed the same measure late Sunday.

With the bill now signed into law, Schiavo's feeding apparatus was likely to be re-attached, probably later Monday, following a federal court hearing.

Although approval of the legislation has never been in doubt, the frenzy surrounding the case has brought to the fore debate on the relationship between the sanctity of life, states rights, and definitions of constitutional powers.

"The legal issues, I guess everyone, are complicated, but the moral issues are not," thundered House Republican Majority Leader Tom DeLay. "Terri Schiavo is not brain-dead, she talks and she laughs and she expresses happiness and discomfort."

However, Democratic Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi argued Congress is overstepping constitutional bounds because the decision concerning Terri's future belonged to her husband, Michael Schiavo, "and to God."

She called the bill "unconstitutionally dubious" and accused congressional Republican leaders of "highly irregular and an improper use of legislative authority."

Terri Schiavo has been incapacitated since a 1990 cardiac arrest that damaged her brain.

Her feeding tube was removed Friday after a protracted legal battle that pits Michael Schiavo against his parents, Bob and Mary Schindler. AFP

POPE John Paul II waves an olive branch from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Palm Sunday, March 20.

Pope's inability to speak raises new doubts about his recovery

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul II's latest appearance stirred lots of thousands of pilgrims, but the frail Pontiff's inability to manage a simple greeting to his largest audience in months raised new questions about his recovery.

John Paul pressed a hand to his face and pounded a lectern to appease frustration during his Palm Sunday appearance, which lasted less than a minute, in a window of his apartment overlooking St. Peter's Square.

It was the first time in 20 years in papal that he was unable to preside over the Mass ushering in Holy Week, the most important season on the Christian calendar and hang one of his favorite appointments.

Just a week earlier, before his release from a Rome hospital after feb. 24 surgery to install a breathing tube in his windpipe, John Paul had been able to recite a few lines in a raspy voice. But on Sunday, with up to 50,000 expectant pilgrims packing the square, he said nothing, slapping the lectern with an open hand after waving as usual to them.

An aide then hastily closed the white curtains to his window. Television officials did not zoom in close on the pope as it has during his other recent window appearances.

The adoring crowd applauded and grew teary-eyed at the sight of John Paul, clearly moved even though he didn't address the faithful or read out a few lines of his weekly blessing.

"We could feel his presence in the whole square, even if he didn't speak," said Hadisa Rowden, an Anglican tourist from England.

But the stark appearance threw doubt on the pope's convalescence after being hospitalized for two breathing crises in less than a month. It was yet another signal that the papacy is entering a new phase, with the pope in his bandage mask delegating important events to vice-chancellors.

The use of television and video has become more important to John Paul's papacy as he is elevated by his silhouette and his Vatican seeks to reassure the faithful with his image. Pilgrims at St. Peter's on Sunday strained to see him high in his window and followed his appearance on giant video screens erected in the square.

John Paul's vicar for Rome, Cardinal Camillo Ruini of Italy, presided over the Palm Sunday Mass, and Archbishop Leonardo Sandri of Argentina—the Pope's voice for the public since his latest hospitalization—read out a message from the Pontiff in the central garden, cited on the sun-drenched square.

"With great joy I salute you," the pope's message said.

He singled out young people for a special greeting and mentioned World Youth Day in Cologne, Germany, in mid-August—the only scheduled foreign trip this year. But he did not express his desire to be there, something he had done on several recent occasions.

The Pope suffers from Parkinson's disease, which affects muscle control and makes it difficult for him to speak clearly. The Vatican has said the Pope's doctors will decide when the tube should be removed from his throat.

Sunday's Mass, which commemorated Jesus Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, included a special prayer for the fourth calling him "our beloved father" and asking that he continue to be "servant up to the gift of life." AP

Japan firms battle for hair loss solutions

TOKYO—As corporate battles provide hair tonic solutions in Japan beaten up Monday with one cartoon top cosmetics maker Shiseido launching a new tonic to rival the market leader.

Shiseido Japan subsidiary hair tonic for men, using hair growth-boosting substance, will have it Tenbo Plus to succeed and to Rogaine product off the top shelf.

"With the launch of this product we aim to win the top market share," a Shiseido spokesperson said. "We want to increase our share to 20 percent."

Shiseido currently holds 14 percent of the Japanese market.

The company spokesperson said shiseigen is categorized as "a quasi drug" unlike Rogaine which is designated as a pharmaceutical product, continuing unlawful development US drugmakers Upjohn, now Pfizer.

Tenbo tonic, selling ¥5,250 (US$49.50) will result the market leader position of Shiseido, and the Shiseigen can only about 30 percent of the Japanese market for hair growth products, a Tenbo spokesperson said.

Tenbo raises the market market at 50 billion yen ($525 million) in terms of shipments for its annual launch next year.

Tenbo's P&B Labs, designed for women, will hit the shelves on April 1. AFP

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Date /Time	SUBJECT UNDER BM 850 /TITLE OF LECTURE/CREDIT UNITS	LECTURER
April 2, 2005		
8:00-10:00	ADR (Fundamentals of Arbitration) 2 cu	Dean Custodio O. Parlade
10:15-12:15	MCLE Prescribed (Land Registration & Cadastral Proceedings) 2 cu	Justice Oswaldo D. Agcaoili
1:00-3:00	Oral Advocacy (2cu)	Justice Hugo E. Gutierrez, Jr.
3:15-6:15	Updates in Criminal Law (3 cu)	Justice Rodolfo G. Palattao
April 9, 2005		
8:00-10:00	Updates in Remedial Law (2 cu)	Justice Wilanon L. Aquino
10:15-12:15	MCLE Prescribed Subject: Environmental Law) 2 cu	Justice Oswaldo D. Agcaoili
1:00-3:00	Legal Writing, (2 cu)	Justice Isagani A. Cruz
3:15-6:15	ADR (Practice and Procedure in Arbitration) 3 cu	Dean Custodio O. Parlade
April 16, 2005		
8:00-10:00	International Law (2 cu)	Prof. H. Harry L. Roque, Jr.
10:15-12:15	Updates in Constitutional Law (2 cu)	Atty. Jacinto D. Jimenez
1:00-3:00	Trial Skills (2 cu)	Justice Edilberto G. Sandoval
3:15-6:15	Legal Ethics (Attnie in Disbarment & Suspension) 3 cu	Usec Ernesto L. Pineda
April 30, 2005		
8:00-10:00	MCLE Prescribed (International Legal Processes) 2 cu	Prof. H. Harry L. Roque, Jr.
10:15-12:15	Pre-trial Skills (2 cu)	Justice Lucas P. Bersamin
1:00-3:00	Updates in Election Laws (2 cu)	Justice Reginaldo S. Waamburg
3:15-6:15	Legal Ethics (Responsibilities & Liabilities of a Lawyer) 3 cu	Justice Nicolas P. Lapeña, Jr.

Our venue would be at the Par Room of Club Filipino, Greenhills, San Juan. M.M. For inquiries and registrations you may call our office at Tels. 372-4807, 373-5000 loc. 18 Fax. 372-4732

US eyes 'other options' in dealing with N. Korea

BEIJING—The United States will consider other options for ending the dispute over North Korea's nuclear program if the North refuses to cooperate in a negotiated settlement, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Monday.

At a news conference after meeting with President Hu Jintao and other Chinese leaders in Beijing, Rice said if North Korea refuses to cooperate, "then of course, we'll have to look at other options."

But Rice made it clear that a military attack was not one of them.

"Whether the talks can restart depends on North Korea. Everyone is waiting and is ready to have a constructive discussion," Rice said of six-party talks to halt the North's nuclear ambitions that have been stalled since last June.

The North insists that it needs a nuclear program to generate energy and Rice said Washington was "prepared to think of those energy needs," but she underscored that progress would only be made in a multinational setting.

"We hope North Korea understands that the (six-party talks) is the only way to address their needs," Rice told a news conference on the last day of her two-day visit to Pyongyang's closest supporter Beijing.

She said "everybody is aware there are other options to the international system."

The options could include working tough economic sanctions through the United Nations Security Council. North Korea has suggested the US might launch a military invasion, although Rice and other US officials have said repeatedly they do not intend to do that.

A state department official, speaking on condition of anonymity, was cautious when asked about alternatives should talks fail, and said he could not remember any discussions regarding a deadline.

"If they continue going down this road, not only would the United States, but with Japan, with South Korea, with China and with Russia, not to mention with the rest of world, they're going to have a problem," the said.

China sees the final step as a week-long tour of Asian capitals for Rice, and the short officials for America's new chief diplomat. President Bush's second-term pledge to carry democratic ideals around the globe has met with suspicion in China, where government control remains a constant fact of daily life.

During her visit, Rice said that she discussed North Korea with Chinese leaders, and the "strong emphasis of the conversation" was on how such governments—"especially China"—could persuade the North to return to negotiations.

Rice said that Beijing—the close ally of otherwise isolated North Korea—has a special role to play in persuading Pyongyang to come back to the bargaining table.

North Korea has said it already has at least one nuclear weapon and refused to return to negotiations, citing Washington's "hostile" attitude.

Beijing has suggested that the United States hold one-on-one talks with North Korea, but Washington has ruled out that option and has instead urged a resumption of the talks that also include China, South Korea, Japan and Russia.

Rice said that the resumption of the talks depending on Pyongyang.

On another issue of concern in Washington is China's passage this month of a law declaring its intention to use military force against Taiwan, split from the mainland in 1949, should Taipei formally declare formal independence.

"Clearly the anti-secession law did increase tensions," Rice said at the news conference after meeting with President Hu and other Chinese leaders.

Rice said she told Chinese leaders that "the most useful path would be to find ways to reduce tensions."

Under its compliment and purposely ambiguous policy on Taiwan and Taiwan, the United States is obligated to provide defensive weapons to Taiwan if it is attacked by the mainland.

She also suggested that European governments would be acting irresponsibly if they sold sophisticated weaponry to China that might one day be used against US forces in the Pacific. AP

AFP

Israel plans 3,500 new West Bank homes, paper says

JERUSALEM—Israel plans to build 3,500 new homes on occupied West Bank land for a residential complex connecting a major Jewish settlement to Jerusalem, the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth reported on Monday.

It said Prime Minister Ariel Sharon ordered the construction of two neighborhoods between Maaleh Adumim and Arab East Jerusalem last week under proposals to annex Israel's hold on "Greater Jerusalem."

Israel captured Jerusalem in the 1967 Middle East war and calls the city its capital.

Palestinians want East Jerusalem as the capital of a future state and have demanded that Israel abide by its commitment under a US-backed peace "road map" to freeze all settlement construction.

US President George W. Bush has backed an Israeli plan to keep large West Bank settlement blocs round Jerusalem as part of any final peace accord.

No immediate comment was available from Israeli or Palestinian officials on the report. AP

Japan residents spend sleepless night after quake

GENKAIMA—Nearly 3,000 people took refuge in evacuation centers on Japan's northern main island of Kyushu on Monday, a day after a magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck, killing one and injuring about 500 people.

On Genkaijima, a small island off the northern coast of Kyushu and hardest hit by the quake, about 200 buildings were either destroyed or damaged, and roads were cracked and blocked in many areas by debris.

Most of the 700 residents of the hilly island fled to the main island and spent a sleepless night in gymnasiums used as evacuation centers.

"I could not sleep because I was so worried," said one Genkaijima resident, a man in his 40s.

"I wanted to stay on the island, but the aftershocks were getting so bad, I felt it was just too dangerous," he said, sitting up on futon mattress.

The focus of Sunday's quake was shallow and off the western coast of Fukuoka Prefecture, about 900 km southwest of Tokyo.

In Fukuoka city the prefectural capital, buildings swayed, roads cracked and broken glass from shattered windows fell on the streets. A 70-year-old woman in the city died from injuries after a cement block wall fell on her, police said.

In some areas, water and gas mains broke and bullet trains and other railway services were halted.

About 500 people were treated for injuries throughout Kyushu, with five remaining in serious condition, Kyodo news agency said.

The meteorological agency briefly issued tsunami warnings after the quake which hit at about 10:53 a.m. on Sunday, but the alerts were lifted about an hour later.

The earthquake recorded at magnitude 7.0 according to a technique similar to the Richter scale but adjusted for Japan's geological characteristics.

Aftershocks and aftershocks up to 6 in magnitude were possible. One of magnitude 4.3 hit at 6:17 a.m.

Seismologists said that an earthquake of magnitude 7 had hit the area about 300 years ago, but there were no records of other major quakes there since.

Earthquakes are common in Japan, one of the world's most seismically active areas where a tremor is recorded every five minutes. The country accounts for about 20 percent of the world's earthquakes of magnitude 6 or greater.

In October 2004, an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.8 struck the Niigata region in northern Japan, killing more than 40 people and injuring more than 3,000.

That was the deadliest quake since a magnitude 7.3 tremor hit the city of Kobe in 1995, killing more than 6,400. Reuters

ENTERTAINMENT

Edito Bonnie G. Velarde

EPT Quizon and Tado host "Art Jam."

Educating Epy Quizon, art teacher

CREATIVITY, creativity, compassion.

Actor Jeffrey Quizon says he's glad to help instill these qualities in children through his show, "Art Jam."

The show, from ABS-CBN Foundation's Educational TV Production, starts its second season on April 2, 9 a.m.

According to the son of Comedy King Dolphy, the best part is that "Art Jam" is fun as much as it is educational.

Actually, he points out, he benefits from the show as well. The De La Salle University graduate, father of a 10-year-old boy says "I learn how to be an effective communicator."

Kids should spend time away from the Internet if they are to explore their artistic potentials, Quizon believes. "Art Jam," through three main segments, playtime, food trip and junk art—will prove viewers that nothing beats simplicity in doing anything.

"There is much you're improving one's craft through one's own hands," says Quizon.

This season, Quizon has a new partner, Arnie Jones, known to TV buffs as Tado. "I've had experience in the former, more effective, and more exciting season toward publicizing one's skills," says the comedian, who appears in several ABS-CBN shows.

"Epy and I want to develop children's fine side because this is one of the most

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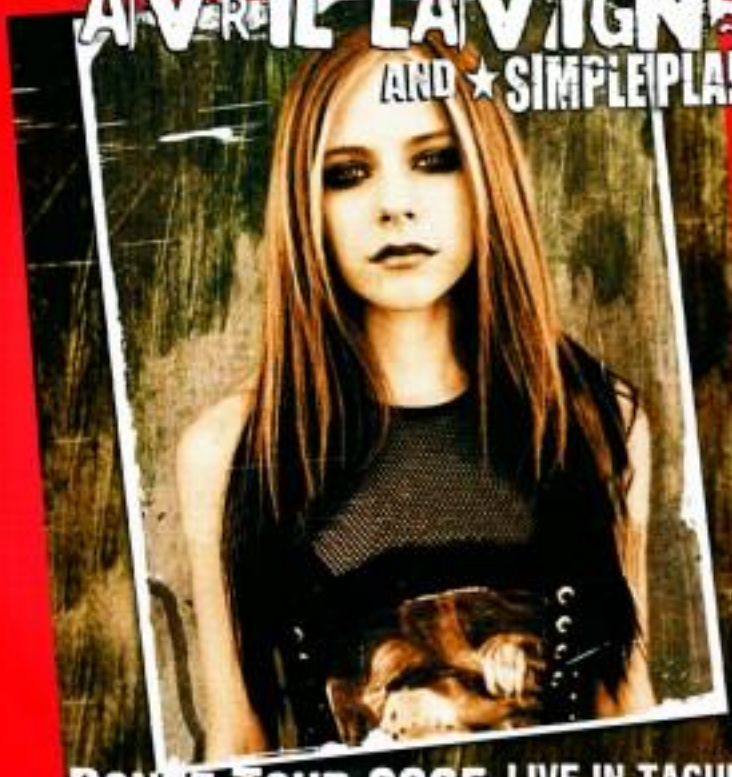

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OPINION

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Fighting spirit

EDITORIALS

MANNY Pacquiao fought a good fight, but he lost to a taller, smarter, more experienced boxer. Still he deserves our applause for his courage and fighting heart. He gave the fight his all, but it was not enough to defeat Erik Morales, much less to knock him down.

People will be talking about the slambang bout in the next few days. What if Pacquiao had not suffered a cut under his right eyebrow; the result of a headbutt (which was not seen by the referee)? Would he have seen better and landed more telling blows on Morales? What if he had been allowed to use his favorite brand of boxing gloves? Would his blows have been more effective?

Boxing aficionados will be discussing many "what ifs," but the fact is that Pacquiao himself conceded defeat to Morales. He lost to a better boxer.

Still, he raised our hung his head in shame. He did his best, and he even tried to stage a rally in the last round, but he could not stem the tide.

Pacquiao is still young, he has a great fighting spirit and he can still become back. He has many fights ahead of him. He has already proved his drawing power at the tills, and should be gaining other fight offers in the near future.

President Macapagal-Arroyo rightly said that Pacquiao set an example of the "toughness we need to surmount our trials and in fighting our way to become a strong Philippines." Yes, it's time we discarded our negative, defeatist attitude and become tough, courageous and more determined to attain our goals, despite all the adversity and the bad breaks that we have been encountering.

If all of us can have the grit, determination and fighting heart of Manny Pacquiao, we can overcome all our personal and national trials, achieve more, and ultimately become a more progressive nation.

Big winners

ERIK Morales was of course the big winner of the fight. Before the fight, and during the bout itself, he simply played it cool. He was not affected by all the hype about Manny Pacquiao. He just played it smart, put into play all the ring experience in the 40 bouts that he had previously fought.

The Mexicans were also big winners. They must have believed all the hype about Pacquiao, because if reports are correct, they did not bet heavily on their man. But Pacquiao's defeat revived Mexican pride, which suffered a big blow when Pacquiao beat Marco Antonio Barrera in 2003. Now the Mexicans can even afford to taunt Pacquiao, saying that he is "all sound, no fury" and that he is not that smart and strong.

The promoters also won big and must have made a killing in the sale of tickets and TV rights. But they had a good gate because Pacquiao is "hot property," one of the best boxers in his class, pound for pound. So they have Pacquiao to thank for the millions that they made.

The audience, both at the MGM Grand Hotel Arena and those who watched the fight on TV, also won because Pacquiao and Morales fought a thrilling, closely contested fight. They got their money's worth.

Big winners in the Philippines were Solar Entertainment and RPN 9. The scores of commercials inserted between rounds—even in the rounds of the undercard fights—must have made millions for Solar and RPN 9. We wonder, however, if the two organizations did not violate an understanding in the TV industry to limit the number of commercials in a program or the coverage of an event. Is there really no way they can enforce the limit on the sad kind of televised coverage of boxing bouts and other sporting events?

Can't we give the TV audience a better deal? Last Sunday, the radio had the results earlier than TV. It was not the first time that happened. Television stations delay the airing of the fight to be able to pack in all the commercials that the program can bear. But the main purpose of TV coverage of sporting events is to give the results—as soon as possible—and not only to provide entertainment. And so, in a sense, last Sunday the TV audience was a loser. But of course, the audience says tuned in to the carrying station because nothing beats the visuals of television.

Is media's reaching out enough?

VIEWPOINT

Jose L. Mercado

THE BOUNDARIES between press freedom and abuse are "blurred," Amando Doronila wrote in the business last March 16. Thus, media abuse of a third case, lodged by former Supreme Court Associate Justice Florenz Regalado against Philippine Star publisher Miss Belinda to "intimidate through imprisonment."

Doronila focused on a piggy-backed issue: Would the refusal by a judge to voluntarily inhibit violate the right of legal head to equal protection? That would stand on its head centuries of jurisprudence between the press and government officials. But former Solicitor General Frank Chavez straddled that issue with a flash-in-the-pan theory: Judges are also human.

The right of reply is one of many issues, as Congress for Media Freedom and Responsibility convenes next month. Our overarching changes in technology, economics and social patterns are working their way through society. Expenditures of P4 million to P40 now reserve $5 million.

Those changes alter media structures and do not it operates. Fun and gambling, for instance, have witnessed away or face to face interface changes. Even the Internet is not impervious.

Texts are frozen in print and panoramic pollen, city hall, courts, Senate, Malacañang, etc. But on the ground, the realities have shifted such interpretive waves, ecological programs, health, pollution, etc. They interlock, hardness of information and meaning.

The press in itself is under-reported, the organization noted. It's emerging as a beat in itself. And the press must explain how it "shifts" to deeply "blurry boundaries" are not understood.

"A labyrinth of technology usually saves journalists into the future," Colombian editor and Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez notes. "(Technology) diminishes the importance of journalists' sources to obtain information and maintain ... fewer has their professional lives more dangerous."

The press, however, is reaching out, not adequately enough for some. The Inquirer's editor-in-chief, Raul Pangalangan, for example, addresses complaints that he also explains how the newsroom operates—or sometimes stumbles.

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God's will

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

BISHOP Oscar Cruz had some interesting things to say about the Department of Health's nationwide campaign for responsible parenthood and a couple of its main tools, "Pills" for short, "there was the Ligtas Tigdas." Now there is the Ligtas Sunog Pills," what it supposed to be second, such as human sexuality, but now become a dangerous family history. What it to be sexual with pregnancy, but now pregnancy, in two unrelated policy things."

He went on, "When shall this country free its citizens with respect? When will it learn to make its people its primary asset? When will it stop acknowledge that it is its population, such as the OFWs, that keep it somehow economically afloat?"

Cruz's new Bishop Jesus Rosales pinpointing acknowledging charm, which is thus the people coming for or supporting government's "anti-life policies" for turned from raising their Government, or themselves unknowingly refrain from doing so. They are too worthy to receive Christ, he says. Justified birth control worldwide go against Jesus and God.

Well, Cruz has a right to be a little peeved that the DOH should put its hands on the same plane as rapists. Which should be a breach in taking seriously as seriously as insults. Both are smearer of life and death. The days we long gone that pregnancy has the same characteristics as chicken pox a the day you invite the scum of God, or has self-professed representatives on earth, down on your cause. I know that Gabriela Garcia Marquez once compared the symptoms of zeal, to those of rhetoric (in "love in the time of Cholera") to stomach ache, dizziness, vomiting. But that is how, or at least the situation when one is making his usual choice whether one's love is required or not, two pregnancy.

A better word would have been "fetal," or arrest, infant class "lapse," or cure, though even "cessa"—particularly with its association with "cessation"—would have been better by half. So of those who think pregnancy is a consummation deviously to be avoided by every means at every turn (of the screw). Those who think

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Why not quality and quantity tourists?

POLITICAL TIDBITS

DeSolo Gilvarry-Cayanan

WOMEN Senate President Jovito Salonga called up yesterday to say he had really followed my column on the highest level. He took it back to Jack Lone some pulled by two unscrupulous former officers of the Philippine National Bank's now branch from 2009 to 2010. Many of the 25 tiny branches say there are about 60 in all are running money and hospital to some members of the branch. Salonga's book for the rest of their lives, but a number are overseas Filipino workers who had put away some amount to see their children through college, so that they could have a better future. The victims have suffered the worst kind of betrayal and that PNB, but it appears to be unconvincing, even if it is acknowledged wrong-doing by its unscrupulous officers by laying them off in mid-2003.

Salonga, co-founder and adviser of Bantay Kabataan, said that the audited BOD group, composed of professionals and well-meaning men, the top law schools in Metro Manila, now take up the case for these victims of fraud. His group is scheduled to meet them soon in order to examine their documents. I am sure the latter's hopes are high that Salonga can help after a shocking quest for justice. It comes out a fitting end of events in this season of hope.

* * *

From low boo-hoo to the Oscars was expected on saying that it's better to have "quality" tourists. Malaysia, Thailand and other Asian neighbors in the region "envy" us because the Philippines has "quality" tourists. I.e., have the rich come to enjoy the country and its sights. I think Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and the other countries mentioned are wonderful countries to visit, but the investment in some of them, the scars, I've visited key cities in Southeast Asia and it is evident to me that they still use servile families who spend a lot of money in those places. My husband and I were in Singapore for a very quick trip this summer. It is the place to just something with tourists. So good to the month of the Great Singapore Sale, but the city nevertheless tried to capture the tourists' dollars, euros, yen and ringgits by putting up limited sales everywhere. It had a good thing it is that there seems to be many things for one regardless of age.

* * *

Interestingly, the Singaporean don't seem to think that have enough tourists. They want more, and the president's tourist trip is the most aggressive of tourists, which will be the government's first. They are obviously targeting the Chinese, the Taiwanese and the Koreans, who constantly and not to Malaysia's Genting. Malaysia where all the casinos are. We asked taxi drivers how business was and the answers were: big in their city, and to a man they seemed to welcome it. But you already have so many tourists, I said. Plenty!! But women could sit and send hotel rates up! I chorus in also the casinos would be a welcome respite. But I'm not Singapore would get more tourists, and that the extra rooms could handle the swamp side of it.

* * *

By way of heading the cab drivers, my husband said that there are already so many tourists in Singapore that the Philippines should go to the Philippines. The cabbie countered, "The Philippines? I know it's a beautiful place, but you have peace and order problems." He had heard that everyone in the Philippines had a gun or that it's so easy to get one. Then there's the Abu Sayyaf.

He could have read the big Manila Times story that morning that spoke of the bandit groups's threat to behead churches during Holy Week. "They really have a lovely country," he said, "but your problem is how to entice more people to go there." He said that after the featured, the tourism should go to the Philippines, but they don't "because their timing it's not safe."

That's a Singapore cabbie talking, and these people know their cars on the ground.

* * *

Canton tourists may not exactly be the "quality" tourists that one has to mind, but Singapore's not objecting to their entry. In fact, the government has built more places for both locals and tourists to gamble. Integrated resorts, 24 out of 4 hours, the casinos are where hotels, malls and hospitals have sprouted with low hotels, food courts and wet stores at night. The idea is to inject what they like to call it "soul" into the city-state, which is famous for its shopping and its gospel of efficiency: neat, neat, neat, neat.

* * *

A friend of mine was telling us that this day **Young Blood** *Mathilda Jordan & Sheila* My mom in Jesus what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? Her welcome contributions from the (sent) yesterday and before.—Ed.

* * *

Paps held on for a few more weeks, perhaps out of sentimentality, or, running, God's blessing, him, who knows really? But there comes a point when after seeing a person you love battle an illness for so long, you learn to let go and walk him without you pain he needs to or that point, even if that means death. After all, death is just a necessary step in a process to see again.

Paps had a distinct laugh that rang in your ears long after you've hung up. He was usually a quiet man who demonstrated all the saying "Speak softly, but carry a big stick." Speak softly he did, in private, but he carried a big stick in the public sphere. He was never one to brag about his achievements; the songs he'd written, the places he'd been to, the company he kept. A gifted musician, he was a self-taught guitar player who started strumming Beatles songs in his teens. It was never just a hobby, because he never tired of it, never gave up on it. Even when his musical preferences changed in the years that rolled by, he started playing professionally in 1970 and continued doing it through the years as he wrote songs, played the bass and sang back-up vocals for bands like Epa Part., Gentle and the Projectile, Bee Bee, The Judas, Asia, Local Heroes, and Reaping Breaking (with the latter he'd been playing for 30 years).

I know that to him, music was what made his life worthwhile, every single day he breathed. I have no doubt that it is still a part of his after-life, wherever that is. I romantic myself with the thought that death is a great and comforting thing for those who have experienced it.

There are others he left behind to cope with death in different ways. Some choose to stay away and forget, some stay and exhume all feeling. Death is a traumatic event and it never leaves you the same. It's a great paradox because you feel diminished and strengthened at the same time. You know you will probably be never the same again, but you also feel better equipped to handle life's outrage and joy and sorrow.

I used to think that when someone is my family died, I would also die because of heartbreak. But two years and two nights on I realize after that has not to happen. Although the pain and feeling of loss are very sublime, you get past that somehow. Time tempers that. You realize that it takes a lot more than death to break you. You realize that it takes the people you love "You find yourself to be more compassionate with people who are dealing with a loved one's illness or death. You will probably never have all the answers, but you know you have it in you to understand life's demands. You learn to cheer your bodies, and let go of everything that is not important. You appreciate the meaning of life being too fleeting to waste on needless fury; you grasp the meaning of it being too important to waste on bearing grudges about family issues or circumstances in life. And time flies' words matter when the person is gone.

It took Paps's death for me to realize that I should have spent harder and better with him when he was around to see. But time rather is too late for regrets. Death changes us in ways that others cannot see in our lives or ours can.

One famous saying puts death in perspective. "There are only two things inevitable in life, death and taxes." I am tempted to argue that this does not apply to me country where I pay no taxes, but then, hello or lack your way out of anything (especially taxes)—and even death in certain instances, given the right connections. But that is yet another thought about which to muse.

The little that I know of death is that, more than wanting you about pain, it is probably the greatest lesson in acceptance you ever learn. It is a lesson in letting go of what you love to a being greater than yourself. He who has a hand in all things. Whatever your personal beliefs are, whatever you conceive Him to be, God will always be a presence you cannot dismount, and our lives, our deaths are, to quote simply, in His hands. Can things be any more comforting than that?

* * *

Mathilda Jordan B. Sheila, 18 works as an Internal resource consultant for a company in Antipolo. She believes her father, Jose Ignacio "Joe" Sheila, is part of greater things in a great place where he is jamming with his favorite musicians and where music sounds even better and jazz has 24/7.

The Eucharist and caring for creation

COMMENTARY

Fr. Steve McDonagh, SSC

(Note: On Holy Thursday, Catholics all over the world commemorate the last Eucharist of the last supper—Ed.)

THE WORD "eucharist" comes from the Greek word *eucharistia* which means thanksgiving. The origin of the Prayer of Thanksgiving, or Mass, is the Last Supper. Jesus took bread and blessed it, and then broke which was about to be consumed at a paschal meal. In this prayer God's action is not seen as something that happened in the distant and distant past to one generation of Israelites and merely generation a week to have been liberated from slavery in Egypt (Ex. 13, 16-7).

Memory is at the heart of the Christian Eucharist as we make God's greatest act of love, the death and resurrection of Jesus, present to us here and now. God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life (Jn. 3:16).

Thanking God for the gift of creation has been present in Eucharistic prayers from the very beginning. Today creative classes are still found in Eucharistic prayers.

Recently, the global and Philippine environmental crisis challenges us that consciously in the Eucharistic prayers is unfortunately and should be changed.

For a country of historical and ideological reasons, the Philippines has not come to realize that most merchants on the Bible, especially the book of Genesis. Although these texts cannot offer definitive answers to solving difficult forms of addiction, they are nevertheless based on an absolute assurance and morality.

Modern science describes how the universe emerged from the mysterious fireball, how the elements were forged in the galactic crucibles, how the solar system originated, the dynamics which shaped planet Earth, the first flickering of life, its evolution and development, and the process whereby special awareness were developed over hundreds of millions of years and was present to us now.

The details of this fascinating journey, planned from the start, are revealed in nature. In every nature, in every atom, in every cell and consciousness.

Catholics should revere these two traditions together in their Eucharistic prayers. These prayers would be called for not just the past but also the future of the outer space of the Earth as God's gift. They should also be a commemorating of the story of God's love and creativity as expressed in the Philippines in its history.

This means thanking God for our unique environment, especially for the forests and fruitful seas of the tropical forest, mangroves and coral reefs. The Philippines is blessed with a fantastic variety of creatures, yet they are becoming extinct at an alarming rate.

Each Eucharistic prayer should draw from local natural history, biology culture and a local understanding of creation. A liturgy rising from this reality would represent a worshipping people who truly live in harmony with God's world. The use of parts, language, images, gestures, music and dance. It would consolidate the customary harvest Filipinos and their environment as in the case of indigenous communities like the T'boli.

In this way a unique feature of Easter Mass Christians would be empowered to protect their forests, mountains, rivers and other ecosystems against foreign and local despoilers and plunderers.

Over the past decade Christians have become more connected about the extensive and often irreversible destruction of the environment. In 1988, the Philippine bishops wrote a pastoral letter on ecology entitled "What is Happening to our Beautiful Land?"

The Catholic Church, globally and in the Philippines, has been slower to recognize the emerging power which good, imaginative liturgy might have in transforming the way Christians relate both to the human person and to the rest of creation.

Since the dawn of human history men and women have sought to express how the deepest mysteries of their lives and the values of their society are bound with the rhythms of the Earth and the cosmos.

Eucharistic prayers in the Missal of Paul VI thank the Father for all the blessings of creation: "Source of life and goodness, you have created all things that they may exist and men with every blessing and all may live to praise you through your Son your glory." The prayer solemnly declares: "Before you are holy indeed, and all creation rightly gives you praise."

Pope John Paul II in many of his encyclicals on the Eucharist, his "Letter to Families" (1994), his remarks on "The various scenario of celebration of the Eucharist have given new powerful expression of its universal and, as we speak, cosmic dimension." The Eucharist is celebrated "in communion with the whole of creation" as a humble offer it to it was in some way celebrated on the altar of the world... It embraces and penetrates all creation. The due of God because man in order to restore all creation to its original purpose. It is the source of all true unity, it gives nothing. He, the Eternal High Priest who by his blood of the Cross entered the eternal sanctuary. That puts back to the Creation and Father all creation redeemed."

Irish Columban missionary Fr. Sean McDonagh is a noted ecologist and author. He worked among the Tboli of Mindanao for 20 years. He has written a number of books, the latest of which is "The End of Life: The Horror of Extinction" published in 2006.

San Pablo de los Montes (2)

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Ramón J. Farpón

THE MADRIGAL of the San Pablo Church, Imus, and Manila, was very popular and it was designed in the Gothic style that Pedro de Cuenca introduced to us Christian. The walls were two meters thick (.61 meters=2 varas) and there were high from the ground to the cornice, for height (varas 7½ meters=15 varas), without counting the towers. The towers, which were many and huge, the cuenca and other accessories.

The bell towers was very low due to the frequency of earthquakes. The cuenca, which was very close to the church, was very high, very wide and in left unused. It was constructed under Italian Orders and had cut rooms or cells and one staircase that would not have been out of place in a palace. The foundations of the church were laid in the 17th century by Fr. Juan Lobato, but it was Fr. Francisco de Lorenzo who finished it.

The main entrance was an object of exquisite sculpture composed of very fine stones. It was in two parts with various main columns and in the spaces different saints. The middle of the door was terminated with some very well sacrificial relief by D. Juan de la Santa, under the supervision of Fr. Francisco Cabezas.

In his history was a native of San Pablo and carved out an exquisite image. The man who was responsible for the jewelry of San Agustin in Binondo, all of which were made in San Pablo. This same man carved the wooden statue of San Agustin in Manila and many others. Dr. Gaspar Pedro Fernández

UP should take cue from the Bernidos

CONGRATULATIONS to the Bernidos of Bohol who were featured in the article titled "Learning by doing' could revolutionize HS education" (PDI, 2/20/05). I am happy to read about them. It's more than 30 years since my partner Lino Marvic and I were in the same beach (Sta. Picnic '62). We were only three in that beach. The idealists instilled in us by our mentors (e.g., Dr. Roger Bernido) has not been erased. As we chose to rest in the country and share our knowledge and experience with our fellow Filipinos. The experiences of Marvic and Chito in putting up a school are almost the same as the ones I went through. Let me cite my case to point out some defects in our system.

It appears from the article that Bernido was prevented from teaching because she had no license. But she could not take the licensure exam for teachers because she had no education units. The true distinguished to take education units? I can't recall. I don't think so. Even if I did, I still have to take the

Across the NATION

Toll on drivers using NLEx: ₱17,000 a month

MAGALALAG, Pampanga—Everyday, driver Jesgo Capuzi keeps a plastic bag near his seat. The receipts he places in the bag, he converted into cash, amount to ₱17,000.

That amount is what Capuzi has paid for using a 17-km stretch of the North Luzon Expressway since Feb. 10 when the Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC) took over the management of the 84-km road from the state-owned Philippine National Construction Corp.

Capuzi, showing the bag of receipts, did not hide his anger. From P8, he now pays P57 for a single trip.

"I used to spend ₱5,000 monthly. The cost of my toll fees has increased by about five times. I would have spent that for more food on [my family's] table," Capuzi said.

His fellow drivers plying the City of San Fernando-Dau route share the same woes, their officials told the Inquirer.

Data is for more than 5,000 drivers using the NLEx from Angeles City, Mabalacat, Magalang, Arayat, Mexico, Masantol, Apalit in Pampanga, Calumpit and Meycauayan in Bulacan.

Tony Silvestre, spokesperson of the Samahang Tsuper at Operator Nationwide Dingit, said they are still demanding a rollback of the NLEx toll rates.

He said Stop Corporate Stealing, a newspaper article on March 20 over the NLEx rates and to demand for the scrapping of the old congressional rate that removed government's control over oil prices.

"The cost of using the NLEx is economic. It is exorbitant. What little earning is made from driving goes to MNTC," Silvestre said.

The MNTC said an agreement, which was signed by former President Fidel Ramos in 1999, set the rates. In that agreement, the current base toll rate was set as 80 centavos/km for cars, ₱1.20 for buses and light trucks, and ₱3.44 for heavy trucks and trailers.

Alvarado said the agreement was concessional because the TRB recently granted the MNTC a 28-year franchise to operate the NLEx. So said the original franchise to run the NLEx was given to the PNCC.

Alvarado said only Congress has the right to approve the granting of franchises.

Based on Ryan, PDI Central Luzon Bureau

Failure to get TRO bad news, says Bulacan solon

TOLL DISCONTENT: Angry motorists protest the increase in toll rates at the Balintawak toll gate of the North Luzon Expressway. —INQUIRER PHOTO

Gov't urged: Help Filipinos in Malaysia

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—The Malaysian government's drive against at least 500,000 undocumented Filipinos in that country has led to cases of human rights violations among Filipinos, according to the party-list group Migrante.

In a forum here last week, Migrante officials appealed to government officials to check on these reported abuses and help Filipinos who are feared to have overstayed or illegally entered Malaysia.

Mario Santiago, Migrante secretary-general, said the involvement of members of the Malaysian government's People's Volunteer Corps in tracking down illegal migrants in Malaysia has led to the abuse of Filipinos.

Santiago said their investigation showed that these volunteers were paid 90 Malaysian ringgit (P1,134) for every undocumented migrant traveled.

Labor export

"If you are wondering why the recent scholarship bled is not supposing these cases of human rights violation, it is because it is the government itself feeding the cash cow of the labor export market. But the government should realize that the rights of these undocumented Filipinos are being violated," the said.

Santiago said their information also showed that the volunteers' lists are from isolated to humorous arrest procedures, respect for human rights and international human instruments law.

"The schoolteens, therefore, is highly open to abuse of authority," the said.

Santiago said even the Malaysian non-governmental organizations are critical of the treatment that undocumented Filipinos have been getting.

Filipinos caught overstaying or without proper travel documents are detained, fined or whipped with rattan sticks to times before they are deported.

Responsibility

Santiago said the government's responsibility was to ensure the safety and security of Filipinos and protect their rights in Malaysia and in other countries.

He said it should ask the Malaysian government to ensure that the Filipinos' rights are respected.

A Migrante position paper said the government should organize an inspection of detention centers in Sabah, Malaysia, to check on the condition of Filipino detainees.

"[We] urge Malaysia acting to take concrete actions to prevent the torture of [Filipinos] in Malaysia," it said.

During a round table discussion with the Inyamas Northern Luzon Bureau correspondent on Friday, Commission on Filipinos Overseas Executive Director Angelo Fernandez Jr. said since 2002, the government has been operating an inter-agency task force to look into the conditions of Filipinos in Malaysia.

He said the task force—composed of representatives of the departments of foreign affairs, labor and employment, and social welfare and development, and the Bureau of Immigration—is active in addressing the problems of alleged human rights violations and recovering undocumented Filipinos.

Lawyer Rina Jimenez-David, head of the regional Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, said the government could link up undocumented Filipinos to their families in the Philippines.

"But what we cannot provide [them] are benefits and other monetary measures [that documented workers are entitled to]," she said.

ANTITERROR PATROL
Government troops use whatever means available to patrol the sea of Lantoy, Basilan in a continuing campaign against terror groups and bandits.

Cops rescue trader after husband flees kidnappers

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna—Police rescued a businesswoman after her husband was able to escape from their abductors by jumping from the suspects' vehicle in Barangay Bambán this town over the weekend, police said yesterday.

SPO3 Raul Jimalo, Los Baños police investigator, identified the victim as Judy Inamania, 44, said his wife Evelyn, 37, residents of Barangay Dampalit, Lipa City.

Jimalo said traffic at Pila town's junction was suddenly disrupted when a man jumped from a black Isuzu Crosswind (PCL 225) at around 7:20 p.m. on Saturday.

He said when traffic policemen came over to help him, the man, who identified himself as Jude Sumaoang, immediately told them that his wife had been kidnapped and that he owned the vehicle that the suspects used.

"We quickly alerted all our mobile units and the Calamba police about the incident. It can close three zoned," Jimalo said the [illegible].

While police cars were after the suspects, another group of heinous rescued Evelyn from an abandoned warehouse in Barangay Mayhay.

Inamania later told police investigators that they were searched by four suspects, two of whom were identified as Jack Ali, 35, and Grace del Mundo, from their house in Lipa City hours before the kidnapping.

Jimalo said the victim told them that Mundo and Del Mundo, both architects of Barangay Inamalal, Calamba City, owed them P400,000.

He said the suspects went to their house and paid them P50,000 on Saturday morning.

"The suspects told the victims that they would pay their balance as soon as they got to Los Baños. But apparently the suspects wanted them killed," Jimalo said.

Sumaoang said the suspects then brought them to the warehouse.

A few hours after, Mário allegedly took his car and left his wife.

The suspects, Jimalo said, told Inamania that they would kill and bury him somewhere in Calamba City.

"Inamania said he jumped from the vehicle when he saw an armored van answering the road. He said he took the chance to escape then and up dead," Jimalo said.

He said the Inamanias were later brought to a nearby hospital for treatment of their wounds.

Their car was subsequently recovered in a vacant lot in Barangay Banadero Calamba City.

He, however, said they were now having a hard time filing the case against the suspects as the victims had refused to cooperate with them. —Marlon Ramos, PDI freelancer Lazon Bureau

GRIEF
Grieving Leticia Revela and a male relative weep beside the casket of PFC Abel Revela, who was killed during the Camp Bagong Diwa assault on members of the Abu Sayyaf. Arnulo's body is carried by in the family residence in Lusimang Norte, Sta. Maria, Bocaue Star.

Boracay traders urge gov't to let them have titles to land in resort

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

KALIBO CITY—Boracay small entrepreneurs (senior) on Boracay Island in Aklan have urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to revise the survey and subdivision of lots in the island, beginning a 25-year-old ownership dispute between the government and the residents over prized lots on the island.

In a two-page letter dated March 4, the Boracay Foundation Inc. (BFI) called on the President to abide by a recent Court of Appeals (CA) ruling upholding a lower court's decision to void 1978 presidential proclamation classifying the island as a tourist and resort zone does not bar the claimants from having their lands titled.

The BFI said they were against the position of the Department of Natural Resources (DENR) that the 1,032-hectare island resort was "forest land" and therefore, owned by the government.

Vested rights

"We reject this proposition and maintain that we have acquired vested rights on the land as occupy," Orlando Sacay, BFI vice president for external affairs, said in their letter.

The BFI is an association of more than 100 resorts, hotels and other business establishments on the island.

In an earlier letter dated Dec. 10, 2004, the group appealed to the President to issue an executive order directing the release of lands to conduct a cadastral survey so that conflicting claims dating 30 years ago would be settled.

Soaring prices

The letter was signed by 21 officers and members of the BFI led by its chair Benny Chavarry and president Lito Ibiñez.

The prices of lots on the island have soared as tourist arrivals continue to enjoy an upswing for the past several years. A piece of property on the famous white beach now costs from P25,000 to P50,000 per square meter.

The government has stopped considering claims and titling of lots in Boracay after the late President Ferdinand Marcos issued Presidential Proclamation 1801 on Nov. 10, 1978.

Under the proclamation, several islands and coves, including Boracay, were declared as tourist zones and marine reserves under the administration and control of the Philippine Tourism Authority (PTA).

The lands were categorized as public-owned, giving the government the prerogative as to the management and utilization of its resources.

Camarines Norte tribe observes Holy Week in different way

BARACALE, Camarines Norte—If the Catholics observe Holy Week to remember the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ like going to church to hear the Mass on Last Words or join processions, the indigenous people called the Kabihugs, of upland Barangay Pinagbirayan, in Barangay, Camarines Norte observe it by going to the mountains, sea or river.

The community, the some 10 km from the Bicolano town proper, which is already 400 km from the capital town of Daet.

By Velasco, 40, an honorary member of the tribe and once considered the Aeneas (princess) by the 1,200 Kabihug tribe people, said the Inglanon that the Kabihugs, who have a strong faith in Jesus, prefer to be with nature during Holy Week.

Velasco has lived with the Kabihugs, most of whom live under trees and big stones, since she was a baby. She is a graduate of Bachelor's of Arts degree with honors in History and serves as the educator of the Kabihug tribe's people.

She said that during Holy Week, especially on Good Friday, some of the elderlymen would trek to the mountains to hunt wild animals, especially wild pigs.

Rodolfo Bata, tribal council chieftain, said they eat the pig's meat and innerchain into sacrificial to serve as their amulets. Anyone who possesses it would not get tired running," he said.

Some of them would spend several hours at sea to catch seafoods which they offer to Jesus, who identified himself as Jude Samaniel, immediately told them that his wife had been kidnapped and that he owned the vehicle that the suspects used.

"We quickly alerted all our mobile units and the Calamba police about the incident. It can close three zoned," Jimalo said the [illegible].

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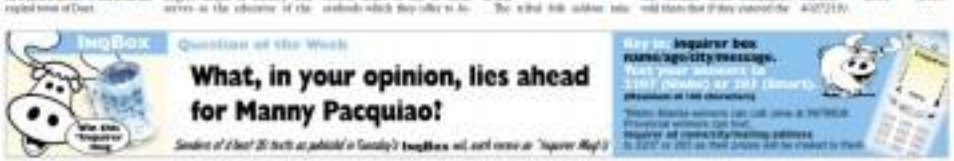

Fight taxes, senator tells local execs in opposition

CALAMBA CITY—Opposition Sen. Jinggoy Estrada reminded an ex-ground hope for the opposition to finally unite but says this is not the time to talk about alliances.

Estrada said it was important for the opposition to unite to serve as a watchdog of government.

"Without a united opposition, we would all be like characters in the Pied Piper following the administration's music," he said before attending graduation exercises of the Center Westpoint College in Tanauan.

He said he responded to Estrada's proposal President Joseph Estrada, as will be leader of the opposition.

"Whatever direction the opposition takes, I'm sure its leaders will consult me before that," he said.

President Estrada is still regarded as the leader of the United Opposition," he said.

As if to drum support that the opposition was besieged with infighting, the younger Estrada said opposition leaders had not scheduled meetings within the week.

When asked if it is possible for Angara, who ran as Sen. Gilbert's vice president in the 1998 national elections, would leave the opposition, he said: "That I will not know. It's still a puzzle to me."

But he said whether or not the opposition unites even should not delay local government units run by officials belonging to opposition parties from pursuing programs to fight poverty and injustice.

Estrada said LGUs run by opposition officials should criticize the Arroyo administration for giving priority to the construction of new Congress at the expense of other legislative measures now pending at the Senate concerning the welfare of local government units and communities.

"Unfortunately today, under this regime of greed, corruption and terror, local government units are no longer independent. Just access to the powers," Estrada, former national president of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines, said, recalling his speech in Cebu City recently.

He said currently, LGU executives do not concentrate in their Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) because they see "no constitutional threat and danger of being withheld and channelled to support the wasteful and extravagant spending of the national government."

"Local government units are the front line service delivery institutions of government, in direct line of contact with our people and communities," he said.

"We need to get ourselves together to empower not just local government units but our communities," he said. Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

VECAYA TRAGEDY ... A villager in Kauswagan, Misamis Occidental cradles a newborn girl who died in typhoon Vecaya. Vecaya downed trees, damaged houses and left thousands of residents in Northern Mindanao homeless. Typhoon Vecaya also claimed the lives of 11 people, including a 3-year-old boy, and left 10 others missing. Vecaya's strong winds and heavy rains also damaged crops worth P200 million. Vecaya is now a tropical storm as it continues to move northwest over the Philippine Sea. Vecaya is expected to leave the country's area of responsibility today. Vecaya also damaged crops worth P200 million. Vecaya is now a tropical storm as it continues to move northwest over the Philippine Sea. Vecaya is expected to leave the country's area of responsibility today.

Soldier killed while negotiating for rebs' surrender

By Jaime Arredo
PDI Visayas Bureau

ORMOC CITY—A soldier was killed and another was wounded on Sunday afternoon when they were fired upon while negotiating with the relatives of two wounded rebels for their surrender in Barangay Bantigue, 18 kilometers north of Ormoc.

Col. Ernesto Torres, commanding officer of the 19th Infantry Battalion based in Kananga town, Leyte, said Sgt. Elmer Rivas Ichiraca, 40, died of gunshot wounds in the chest.

He was brought to the Ormoc Sugar Planters Association (Ospa) Hospital here but doctors declared him dead on arrival.

According to Torres, Ichiraca's wife had just delivered a baby girl, the couple's sixth child.

Wounded was Sgt. Teodoro Lagasca, who was hit in the left shoulder. He was brought to Ospa Hospital for treatment.

"I bleed for my soldiers because they were on a humanitarian mission," Torres told the reporters.

He said Ka Leodegario and Lorenzo went to Barangay Bantigue to negotiate the surrender of the two rebels who were wounded in the encounter in Barangay Alegria, Cebu on last March 13.

While the two were talking to the rebels' relatives, Torres said they were fired upon by the members of the New People's Army (NPA) belonging to the Heraldo Limbing Command of the Leyte Front.

Ka Leodegario was able to run back and hit two of the rebels, said Torres. The two, however, were able to escape.

He said the soldiers were facilitating the surrender of the wounded rebels so that they would be given medical treatment.

"We feel sad that the NPA were avenging the said rebels' effects of their voluntary," said Torres.

An NPA front bulletin was faxed to an unidentified media group Sunday, claiming rebels on March 13 ambushed soldiers who were escorting a wounded rebel for surrender in Barangay Mayo-bog, Ormoc City.

Killed in the encounter was Cpl. Benjamin Cruz, 29, a son of a policeman.

Lorenzo said four women, including a 14-year-old girl, two children and two adults, were wounded up in the alleged rebel camp after the encounter.

The soldiers also found two major assault equipment in his possession, one M-16 automatic assault rifle, which they found to be of "high intelligence value."

Graduates of PMA urged to help in recruitment

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

FORT DEL PILAR, Baguio City—Under First Class Honors Mukay, Antipas's first woman to make it to the top 10 graduating cadets at the Philippine Military Academy, has not volunteered for a tour of duty in Mindanao, unlike some of her classmates.

But Chua's reasons for this may be to speak before the graduating class of her old hometown high school in Tabuk, like the rest of PMA's Sinilagan Class of 2005, whose members graduated March 12. Mukay is 10th among the 140 graduating members of the class.

Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. asked the 100th corps of cadets and his graduating class to begin recruiting fresh blood to join their ranks. He made the remarks during the graduation exercises at Teodoro Gonzalez Sports Stadium, PMA superintendent re-used the graduating cadets and other senior cadets to other graduation ceremonies," Cruz told reporters in a press conference here last week.

Sharing

Cruz led the ceremonial turnover of command from the graduating cadets to the incoming senior cadets.

"After graduation, these new military officers will be on their holidays, so why not talk about their experiences in PMA to high school graduates?" he said.

Cruz said marketing PMA is part of his priorities under the Philippine defense program.

The academy has been beset by scandals involving PMA alumni, but the cadets were never affected by the cases of Brig. Gen. Rolly Jacquin, the rehabilitation of PMA Multipurpose Gym of 2004, PMA officials said.

The United States Army Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, dropped Zamboanga over a dwindling coast last year taken for the students of high schools and universities.

Balangay said enlisting recruits could help PMA attract better candidates for military training.

BOHOL POISONING AFTERMATH

Groups revive campaign vs pesticides

TAGBILARAN CITY—The food poisoning that killed 27 children in Bohol has given environmentalists a new reason to fight for a total pesticide ban in the country and recall for the abolition of the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA).

Philippine-based coalitions of environment groups dared Congress to act on the charter that created the FPA, and abolish it because of its failure to ensure people's safety from pesticides entering the country.

"What can kill insects can also kill humans," said Dr. Romy Quijano, a University of the Philippines toxicologist activist campaigning for a pesticide ban in Mindanao.

Cameron ingredient

Quijano's statement came after the health department confirmed that the 27 children who died on Bohol early this month had eaten food laced with chemical compound carbamate, a common ingredient of agricultural and household pesticides.

"If FPA cannot do its job of ensuring people's safety from pesticides, there is no reason why it continues to exist," according to Dr. Rea Limas, co-convener of the environment group Kalikasan-Peoples Network for Environment (Kalikasan-PNE).

Limas had proposed that the FPA be dissolved and the savings the government will get as a result be used to compensate victims of pesticide poisoning in the country each year.

Fatal recess

Seventy-seven schoolchildren died and scores of others were hospitalized from a mysterious illness in the central island of Bohol on March 9 after eating caramelized sesame cluting worms, a disease that the health department had blamed for careless food preparation.

Quijano had repeatedly warned people against the hazardous effects of pesticides. He said nobody is safe from pesticides, which avoid none are still being used by big banana plantations in Mindanao.

"They're like bombs, designed to kill," said Limas.

Earlier, Quijano said over 30 chemical pesticides, already banned from the European and the United States, is where they originated, are still being used by banana plantations in the Philippines.

Limas said only a few doctors in the country are trained to diagnose pesticide poisoning and most of the cases happen

FOCUS OF ATTENTION
Girls watch a soldier as he guards the war room room of Panacan, Sulu. The government has placed its vendettas as on full alert to guard against suspected plots by terrorists to bomb churches and shopping malls during the Holy Week holidays.

ROUNDUP

3 drown in big wave in Davao

DAVAO CITY—Three young persons drowned while another went missing after a big wave fell them while they were swimming in a beach in Sta. Maria town in Davao del Sur on Saturday morning. Nine other persons survived the incident. Survivors said they were swimming near a beach in Sitio Balatbat, Barangay Kinuskusan, when big waves suddenly struck and dragged them to the deeper portion of the sea. *Anthony Alfeche, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

PDI late chief's room robbed

LUCBAN CITY—Three men armed with a handgun robbed the mother of a former chief photographer from the Manila Bulletin in Barangay Nakasuksan here on March 18. Police said Rhoda Sarmiento, 72, a retired teacher, had just withdrawn P70,000 from the Land Bank of the Philippines branch in San Francisco when three men in a motorcycle blocked the jeepney she was riding on along Maharlika Highway here. Sarmiento was dragged from the motorcycle and, at gunpoint, took Sarmiento's handbag containing the money, a wallet and a cellphone. Police said the suspects singled out Sarmiento as the money and belongings of other passengers remained intact. *Eric Mendoza, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Body formed on Halcon climbs

CITY OF CALAPAN—The Oriental Mindoro Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (Penro) launched March 17 a special climb that traced the provincial tall mirror to capture and monitor the rampant cases on Mt. Halcon in Baco, Bansud and Mansalay towns. Halcon is the highest mountain in the country and yearly visited by mountaineers from all over the country. The task force is composed of representatives from the Penro, municipal barangays of Lantuyan and Maujing, then mountain aspect, private tourism office, private media, law enforcement agencies, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Halcon Mountaineers Association Inc. and the academe. *Mabanne Mesa, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

New Mindoro Penro appointed

CITY OF CALAPAN—Charito Salas, former provincial environment and natural resources officer (Penro), took the place of Teodoro Bagadiz, who died of a heart attack on March 5, as the officer-in-charge of the Occidental Mindoro Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office. While still the Socorro Centro Chief, Salas, with police and military authorities, arrested a businessman on March 4 for illegally possessing 2,500 board feet of lumber in the Lake National Park, Barangay Malamig, Socorro. Oriental Mindoro. Engineer Glen Jacinto, from the National Capital Region, took the place of Salas, according to Amor Asi, Penro information officer. *Mabanne Mesa, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

More scholars for Mindoro

CITY OF CALAPAN—Oriental Mindoro Gov. Arnan Panlilio said the provincial government will have three more scholars. Of the previous two, one is an old city and two from each Mangyan tribe. The program is supported by an ordinance passed by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan. The assistance includes the P6,000 for tuition per semester, P1,000 in books at school as well P1,000 in monthly allowances. *Mabanne Mesa, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Return of mining in village opposed

BULALACAO, Oriental Mindoro—Community leader Emie Bacungbacung, whose family donated the land on which the Bulalacao Elementary School for the housing project of the multi-sectoral volunteer group Gawad Kalinga, said village residents would not allow the resumption of mining activities of the 8.1 Corp mining company in the area. This is so, she said, especially because the housing project of Gawad Kalinga in the village, which has Mangyans as beneficiaries, has already started 1-1 Four additional houses for indigenous people are built in the early '90s but residents, supported by concerned groups from other towns, objected after they realized the mining's negative effects on the environment and that many residents to be evacuated as the company would come from Manila. *Mabanne Mesa, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Soul power in Tagaytay retreat

THE CENTER for Spiritual Learning (CSL) in Tagaytay City will hold a 5-in-1 retreat for the public from Thursday to Saturday. The retreat, dubbed "Soul Power Experience" and conducted by the Brahma Kumaris, will help participants through meditation to explore their soul power and discover what divine virtues energy and what will nurture it. This is located at 9000 Magallanes Drive across Sonya's Garden. Call Sister Leela at (046) 860-2332. For the silly-bound, Brahma Kumaris offers two days retreats—Thursday and Friday—at 1844 Baghdad Street San Antonio Village, Makati City and 617 Camel Botanic City. Call (046) 860-1800 for Makati, and 852-8078 for Quezon City. Meditation is a practical method to re-charge one's spiritual battery.

Drought not major concern of farmers in N. Ecija

CABANATUAN CITY—For the first time, farmers in Nueva Ecija are not worried about the drought accompanying the El Niño weather phenomenon this year.

Antonio Nangel, operations manager of the Upper Pampanga River Integrated Irrigation System (UPRIIS), said "the southeast monsoon from the high water level recorded at the Pantabangan Dam, that main irrigation main source.

Nangel said water level at the reservoir of Pantabangan is at least 207 meters until this can sustain the current and succeeding rice cropping seasons.

He said at least 80,000 hectares of farmlands in Nueva Ecija would be scheduled for irrigation.

"This level is very high compared to the past years' records at this time of the year," he said.

The dam's water level could hardly breach the 175-meter mark in the past years, Nangel said.

Records showed that in the 1998 El Niño phenomenon, the water level in Pantabangan dropped to 173.24 meters.

That year, only about 40,000 hectares in Nueva Ecija were scheduled for the regular rice cropping season.

The worst year for Nueva Ecija farmers was 1983 when no irrigation water could be released from the dam.

Data on the last water level, the old Pantabangan town site, which was submerged in 1972 when the dam started operations, reappeared.

Nangel said the rains brought by typhoons in December last year contributed to the increase in the water volume. *Anacleto Rupisa, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Marine experts worry over decline in Ilocos eel population

By Marlon Ramos
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna—Researchers of a marine and resource irrigation based here yesterday raised concern over the current and depletion of eel in the Ilocos region.

Dr. Rafael Guerrero, executive director of the Philippine Council for Aquatic and Marine Research and Development (PCAMRD), said a recent study done by researchers from the University of Northern Philippines in Vigan City showed the steady decline of eel population along the Abra River.

The study done by Abra fishermonths and Peñarrubia Flordeliz, covered 13 municipalities which included nine towns along the upper Abra River, the main habitat of eels, and four in the river's lower boundary.

A total of 284 fishermen took part in the research held from April to December last year.

Peak catch

Guerrero said most of the fish owners in the upper portion of the river were able to catch an average of one fourth kilo of eel per outing during the peak months of May to June.

"The average catch could be only two kilos per week during the peak months, which means that the resource is declining these years back, the local fishermen along the Abra River had benefited from the abundance of eel," he said in a statement e-mailed to the bureau.

He said five years ago, fishermen in the area were able to haul almost two kilos of eel during the same period.

He said a kilo of eel can be sold for as high as P350.

"But it seldom reaches the market and only a few can afford to buy and enjoy its exotic taste," Guerrero added.

Factors

He said the decrease in eel population could be attributed to the rampant practice of electric fishing, indiscriminate fishing and increase in the number of fishermen along the Abra River.

"But it seldom reaches the market and only a few can afford to buy and enjoy its exotic taste," Guerrero added.

Factors

He said the decrease in eel population could be attributed to the rampant practice of electric fishing, indiscriminate fishing and increase in the number of fishermen along the Abra River.

He said the depletion of eel could have a negative impact on the livelihood of people in the area who depend on fishing as a major source of livelihood.

To stop what he said was the alarming decline of eels in the region, the researchers recommended the strict implementation of policies and ordinances to protect Abra River's natural resources.

Guerrero said they had also informed authorities about the importance of educating fishermen on the consequences of illegal fishing practices.

He said they would also launch an information campaign that would help boost the eel population in the river.

Popular food

Eel (Anguilla spp.) is a very popular fish to Ilocos and considered an exotic food among connoisseurs in the Ilocos Sur region, including the Philippines.

It freshwater fish usually found in rivers and creek systems, eel has a life span of 8-15 years, which it spends in rivers.

It usually migrates to the deep sea to breed and eventually die.

METRO

Metro Manila security assured for Holy Week

A DOE outfit for bombs and other explosives inside a long terminal at Manila's North Harbor as Metro Manilans begin their exodus to the provinces for the Holy Week.

Park may soon live only on canvases

By Tina G. Santos

Board of judges upholds new Collegian editor in chief's win

By Alcuin Papa

IS teachers press demand for back wages

By Alcuin Papa

2 car theft syndicate members fall

By Nancy C. Carvajal

Suspects in UP stude's slay nabbed

By DJ Yap

We're the richest city, not QC, says Makati

By Terra V. Quintumdo

CSI 100TH EPISODE

ANN airs the 99th and 100th episodes of "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" (Los Negas) back-to-back in a two-hour special on March 28. In Manila, telecast starts at 9 p.m. Tales "Ch-Ch-Changes," the landmark 100th episode delves into the little-known world of transsexuals. It broke all network television viewership records in the United States.

HONEYLOU Del Rosario

CHIN CHIN Gutierrez

HELENE Hargens

Good Samaritans in show biz

DOLLY WOOD
Dolly Ann Carvajal

GRACE as in Holy Tuesday. I'd like to start there, as those Dr. Corpuz-ians. In fact, of late, allow me to focus my column of the celebrities who have been Good Samaritans in dealing with the latest show biz issues affecting them. How Dr. Corpuz sometimes be like the Way of the Cross. Just like Jesus, he used his ability to relieve the Dagdiwan caused by toothaches. In the UK, Pauline Pilares who helps innocents like dental fungis and quarters and Dulce Rosario who can gargle (the injection) abound. But of course there are other kind. Immoral examples. They are the cases who make the biz a little less like Calawan.

OLIVER MONTANO—Before a spreadsheeting a condominium campaign for the children of his common-law-ed video shoot-out comically ill due to food poisoning. Instead of saying a show at Mindi's on April 2 called "Pamaypay ng Mga Bata," in which he and his celebrity friends will perform in public restroom.

LITO LAPID— The darling reunion took the liberty of calling to some of his fellow-ex-12 had-a-falling out with her former best friend Deborah Sun. It ended up to a legal battle. Issue #12 was and Deborah was sentenced to seven-man-to-jail. If Tim Dimitrado escape to the US just like that. Mine-but Deborah is back in town and suffering from free-taxes. If says that she has high-hopes her friend and hopes that Deborah gets the first transplant she badly needs. 12 is not even demanding payment anymore of Deborah's huge debt. She just wishes that Deborah will talk to her in person for old times' sake.

ANGEL LOCSIN—is a staff member of a TV show told me how concerned and worried Angel was when a hit player figured in a water accident during her taping. She told the crew to rush the "extra" to a hospital immediately. It turned out they were just playing a joke on her and it was a comedy show. But her fainting is good but really dressed. What more if the accident was for real?

CHIN-CHIN GUTIERREZ—This beauty inside out unceasingly does her share to protect Mother Nature even when nobody's looking. It's always been her priority. How far it got is left for her. Going to Global Earth has three reasons.

MONSIGOR DEL ROSARIO—This former Olympian has made it his lifetime mission to unite kids and save them from the greed of those who harass them. Most recently had a Tambayanihi Opera in Boracay in which kids from all walks of life were given chance to shine. Not to mention the fab prizes they won. Msgr is willing to reach kids even for free as long as they have the heart and drive for sports. While other saints may refuse when they have no money, Msgr. keeps himself busy by sharing his marvelous expertise with the youth.

Reader's corner

Hi, Dolly, dear,

After I read the article from the online newspaper's entertainment section, about Michael's embarrassing experience in the Mr's. World pageant, I immediately sent an e-mail to the Miss World into one which ended up in the Miss World President's inbox. Anyway I would like to share with you the reply of David Manuel.

President Mr's World

I'm reminded of the month of March. Those who after reading his published obituary stated: "The news of my death is exaggerated." News she was mistaken? Well, that's sure to us! What's news? What specifically? Who exaggerated. Issues—violence—where—how? We aren't here to use the beginning and I can tell you without hesitation that news is our news as well. She was treated with dignity and care. We were taken with her beauty grace and charm. She played very well in the competition and we were proud to feature her in a special to take to Japan for the Philippines. If you or anyone has specific knowledge of this alleged incident we'd love to be invited to enlighten us. We know of no such incident but we are open-minded. I commend this payment to applaud openness. He received several letters around the world. The competition is fair, unbiased and treatment is balanced and professional. Each delegate including Miss Philippines received special treatment, made accommodations and received gifts. I will categorically reject your unfounded and unscrupulous allegations. They are false!

TADO

Epy Quizon...

important aspects of development."

Tado himself has three daughters, and proudly declares Epy's one. He says having "an Issa" gives him a different perspective since it has a different audience.

Epy explains: "It's more challenging to produce for children because they are open to tell a your philosophy—not fully influenced by external elements."

"Through the Arts Act segment, the show teaches children the concept of responsible development. "Sa Jars, being a relevant show for Filipino kids, is revealing the unexplored facets of television," says Quizon.

It's easy to do, Quizon boasts agree, because it allows them to do "normal, normal" roles.

Executive producer Quizon revelas his dream is designed for children ages 9 to 13, or grade four to seventh or next high school.

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SPORTS TV
TUESDAY, MARCH 13, 2008
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy S. Molavedra

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■ Athletes welcome Philsports home /A22

■ Epson Cup 2 leveling meet ends today /A21

Pacquiao manager sees rematch in September

Plastic surgery for RP hero

By Edwin L. Lagumbay, Contributor

MANNY Pacquiao's new manager, Shelly Finkel, is not about to sulk in the corner and start finger-pointing, a day after the Filipino ring hero lost by unanimous decision to Mexican Erik Morales. Finkel has started laying the groundwork for Pacquiao's next career move.

The well-respected boxing manager yesterday informed members of the boxing media that he and Top Rank president Bob Arum, who also promotes Morales' fights, will soon sit down to draw up a prestige rematch between the sports and the Mexican icon.

Arum expressed satisfaction at the outcome of the fight Sunday, praising both Pacquiao and Morales for putting on a classic fight to the delight of the 14,229 fans at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada.

According to an industry source, Finkel is looking at a Pacquiao-Morales rematch "sometime in September."

The same source said Finkel is also considering making Pacquiao fight another or his "in territory" in the East Coast, where a big chunk of the Filipino diaspora is concentrated.

Meanwhile, doctors have suggested that Pacquiao undergo a corrective plastic surgery to close the deep cut in the nasional following the accidental headbutt by Morales in the fifth round of their 12-round fight Sunday.

Pacquiao eventually fought with one eye in the second half of the fight as he bled coming from the cut hampering his vision and affecting his defense.

Yesterday morning, Dr. Lee Vega said a team of doctors will re-examine the Filipino fighter's eye above the right eye to find out if the wound was properly stitched.

After testing the whole morning yesterday, Pacquiao joined Finkel for a brunch at one of the restaurants at the MGM Grand Hotel.

MANNY Pacquiao (right) cools his eye a right straight to Erik Morales during the 12th round of their super featherweight fight at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada. Sunday. A rematch is tipped in September. AFP/EPA

Ring Magazine: Manny still king

By Edwin L. Lagumbay, Contributor

FILIPINO ring hero Manny Pacquiao still remains as the world's No. 1 featherweight despite his lose last Sunday to Erik Morales in their monumental 12-round fight at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Ring Magazine, the world's leading authority in ranking boxers, is retaining Pacquiao as its best featherweight because he fought Morales in the favorite 130-lb. super featherweight class, according to editor Nigel Collins.

Pacquiao's command reign a complete champion at 126.4 years will be for long, though, as the Filipino ranks has expressed his interest to continuing his career as an equal to the 130-lb division.

"I like the weight and I'm going to stay at this weight," Pacquiao told boxing reporters after the classic fight Saturday.

Pacquiao's decision to remain as a super featherweight will next likely sets him another crack at Morales, who earlier announced he's willing to take on anyone listed up to him by his promoter, Top Rank, and manager Bernardo Bellotar.

Top Rank boss Bob Arum rounded up him as the prospect of a Morales-Pacquiao rematch while downplaying suggestions of a fourth showdown between the two and Barrera.

International boxing insiders say down apparently no longer wants to deal with his former ward, Oscar De La Hoya, with whom he has a falling out months ago. De La Hoya promotes Barrera.

"Either way, because of his gallant stand against Morales, Pacquiao's unbeatable at his profitable fights but not diminished one bit," said a source in Las Vegas. "The handlers of both Barrera and Morales are definitely salivating over the prospects of a rematch with a Filipino hero."

Meanwhile, Filipino 2 "The Damus" Gomez, who made an impressive debut in Las Vegas with a first-round demolition of Hi-Am Glenn Donaire, is reportedly planning to stay in Los Angeles for several more weeks to continue training.

Tom Aldaguer, though promoter Sam-my Gello-ani, said yesterday they haven't fixed up another engagement for Gomez.

Pocket tilt for RP five in peril: Russia lone confirmed entry

By Jose Navarro

THE POCKET tournament being planned to gauge the strength of the national men's basketball team may yet end up in just a showcase of skills between two nations.

Teams from Japan, Iran, Qatar and South Korea—four of the Philippines' toughest rivals on the Asian scene—have all bagged off from the tournament slated to start on Easter Sunday.

Only Russia has confirmed participation, leaving the organizing Philippine Basketball Association and the Basketball Association of the Philippines to shelve the tourney.

The pocket tournament, also designed to build the cohesion of the newly formed RP squad, has been moved instead to April 17-19.

The RP team is composed mainly of PBA stars.

PBA operations chief Ricky Sanoy said the countries which declined the invitations are currently tackling tournaments which will not wind up until mid-April or the earliest.

Sanoy, however, said the main pocket caging will push through in April, even if only the Russians could come.

Meanwhile, the PBA yesterday cancelled its games on Easter Sunday after learning that some key players have booked flights to spend the Holy Week in their provinces.

"Any player here who, using foreign soldier, let's (These players thought there would be no games for a week) during the Holy Week," said Sanoy. "But even at stage PBA-Samsung will assign Gordon to fly registrants for the US Many of these players have already booked flights for the US."

Sanoy said most of the players, who also belong to the 25-man national pool, are from Alaska, San Miguel Beer, Talk 'N' Text, Coca-Cola and Ginebra.

"The expected absence from the games was a big factor, that's why we decided to shelve the games on Easter Sunday," he said.

The PBA originally scheduled matches pitting Alaska against Red Bull Barako and Coca-Cola against Talk 'N' Text on Sunday.

In-form Reyes tops Japan Open

Sul Ki Reyes pockets about P777,000.

JOYZY "Sisa" Reyes fired consecutive Rodolfo "Boy Sarreon" Lyon, 8-5, Sunday to win the 10th Japan Open and the top purse of 1,800,000 yen (about P777,600) at the Nan-Hai Hall Sagamiko Tokyo, Japan.

The 30-year-old Reyes trounced Japan's Hiroaki Tanaka while Lyon downed another Japanese, Hidetoshi Takimoto, in the semifinals to avenge his all-Filipino title clash.

In so doing, Lyon avenged another Filipino former world No. 1 Francisco "Bunyo" Bustamante, who was beaten by Takimoto in the last 64. Tanaka, on the other hand, ousted ex-world champion Dan-Ping-yang of Chinese-Taipei in the last 128.

The win boosted Reyes' hold of the No. 1 spot in the 2008 Player Money List with total winnings of $46,919.00.

At second place is former US Open winner Corey Deuel who has won US$23,483.00. Reigning world pool champion Alex "The Lion" Pagulayan is in third place (US$20,500.00), while Bustamante is in fourth (US$17,550).

According to Mr. Caparas of Pistol Sports, other notable participants in the Japan Open were Mika Immonen of Finland and Ralf Souquet of Germany. The Filipino brigade included Antonio Gabica, Ronil Gallego, Antonio Ling, Warren Kiamco, Dennis Orcollo, Rodolfo Luat and Dennison Kairuhan.

Billiard and Snooker Congress of the Philippines president Efraim Fajardo said the Reyes-Lucban duo proved once again that Filipinos stand a good chance of sweeping the gold medals in billiards in the 2008 Manila Southeast Asian Games. —Gerlan Remorosa, Contributor

Athletes welcome PhilSports home

By Mari Anthony Reyes

DE VEGA-MERCADO

THE COUNTRY'S bets in the Southeast Asian Games this November will have no regrets leaving their dilapidated quarters at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

Former track superstar Lydia de Vega-Mercado, now the chief of athletes' advocates, yesterday said the athletes are taking their impending move to new quarters at the PhilSports complex "positively."

"I haven't heard (of) any complaints so far, unlike in previous divisions of the PSC (Philippine Sports Commission)," Dr. Vega-Mercado told the Inquirer. "Magandahan ang dating sa kanila (They are taking the developments positively)."

More than 300 athletes will be quartered in 36 newly-refurbished rooms at the PhilSports complex in Pasig.

PSC officer-in-charge Jacinto Granzon announced last weekend that the PhilSports will soon become the "SEA Games Village." The facility will have an air-conditioning unit and a first-class cafeteria.

Dr. Vega-Mercado praised the PSC management for its decision to attend to the "athletes' concerns."

"I don't meddle in the athletes' gripes on their SEAs (national sports association) because there is a forum for that," she said. "I only try to help them air their basic requests, and so far every concern has been addressed."

Dr. Vega-Mercado's team is composed of former national women's basketball coach Rut Castelo, Olympic boxing silver medalist Onyok Velasco and former national netman Cecil Ong.

Estimo: I didn't say that

NATIONAL Chess Federation of the Philippines secretary general Jayrex Estimo yesterday clarified he never said it was Rep. Mare Dehesura and Grandmaster Eugene Torre "who must be held responsible" for the postponement of the FIDE championship against Asia by the National Bureau of Investigation.

Estimo, a lawyer, pointed out that when he wrote in a letter to the Inquirer Saturday was, "The original respondents in this case who received complaints from the NBI was him, Mar Dehesura, who was then the president of the NCFP."

Estimo says that letter is routine in an inquiry to satisfy that appeared on the same day. It said the Philippine Sports Commission was ready to [illegible] for his alleged maltreatment of PSC funds.

Estimo recalled that "it was Any Dehesura and GM Eugene Torre who solicited the amount from the PSC to pay the plane fare of the 18 players who competed in the 2000 World Youth Chess Championship in Greece. For unusual homework to the PSC, it released the money in disbursement of 11 athletes and 7 officials.

"The truth is there were only nine players who went to Greece accompanied by GM Torre. When the amount was released, GM Torre and I used the same to buy the plane tickets of the absentees. Six allowances were requested in the letter of Any Dehesura and GM Torre."

Estimo also explained that Dehesura directed him to write "the PSC to realign the financial assistance to conform to the purpose for which it was solicited—that of plane fares and not allowances of the youth players.

"However, the former PSC officials failed to act on our request, thus passing on to the NCFP in a final note of our 'own doing.'"

Six-man RP squad vying in Azerbaijan boxing meet

A 169-MMA Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (AMAP) squad left yesterday for Baku, Azerbaijan, to compete in the 8-A Chronikov Cup 2005. The team, headed by former Mayor Lucenito Benito and coached by Alexander Arroyo and Ronald Chavez, is composed of Ulysses Tabuzo, Franklin Ablao, Jose Tyson, Jonard Lanao, Anthony Bercasio and Mark Jason Melligen. Incorporating the squad is referee-judge Teodoro Zarate. The team's particular invitational event, slated March 20-28, was made possible through the support of the First Gentleman Foundation, Philippine Sports Commission and Villa Heights. It is part of the AMAP's build-up for the Southeast Asian Games in November.

'Day of mourning'

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

WE LOST and that's it, we lost.

I mean we all lost, the entire nation lost, and that's why the nation is in a state of mourning. If the flag be put at half-mast all week, I would have no objection.

I say this because, just days before the fight, Freddy Roach, the former PBA commissioner, said: "If Manny Pacquiao would lose to Erik Morales—God forbid that wouldn't happen—it would be a day of mourning for all of us."

Sadly, it happened.

And if we were knowledgeable about boxing, we would have known that there is a reason for that," she said. "I only try to help them air their basic requests, and so far every concern has been addressed."

Dr. Vega-Mercado's team is composed of former national women's basketball coach Rut Castelo, Olympic boxing silver medalist Onyok Velasco and former national netman Cecil Ong.

And if we were knowledgeable about boxing, we would have known that there is a reason for that," she said. "I only try to help them air their basic requests, and so far every concern has been addressed."

Dr. Vega-Mercado's team is composed of former national women's basketball coach Rut Castelo, Olympic boxing silver medalist Onyok Velasco and former national netman Cecil Ong.

When Pacquiao lost, its monetary impact on almost every Filipino was of doubly grief, as though a member of the family had suddenly died.

It seemed like we were seeing the Harvey Aquino assassination all over again. Tragic.

It seemed like Vicente Sotto had been schooled for days, the debacle happening on a Palm Sunday noon-day overcast skies.

It seemed like the world had stopped, the clock not working anymore.

Nobody's in blame for this, Sir. Pacquiao.

Pacquiao had given it his best shot. Simply put, his best was not enough.

Morales had given it his best shot. Simply put, his best was more than enough.

While we praise the gallantry of Pacquiao—he fought with only one good eye from middle of the fifth up to the final bell of the 12th round—we must also raise a glass to the big curse of Morales.

If it's any consolation, while Morales, 28, was the better fighter on Sunday save his few rare years his junior, Pacquiao emerged the courageous fighter between the two.

Bereft of a lower stuff would have spelt, if not counted along, had they been put on the shoes of Pacquiao. In the last seven rounds of the 12-round bout, Pac Man was fighting 'handicaped' by a huge handicap. That gaping wound on his right eyebrow—whether caused by an accidental head butt or a right cross in the fifth round—had practically rendered Pacquiao blind on one eye.

After reflecting that injury, Morales had cautioned that wound relentlessly if only to pound Pacquiao into submission.

Other boxers would have collapsed from the sheer loss of blood virtually oozing from that one-inch cut like a bizarre game bayawan.

But not Pacquiao.

Endowed with a deathless spirit and an unstoppable, unbreakable heart, Pacquiao plodded on, fought on like a warrior in the world of Game of the Pinoy. So memorable. Oh, "So Fine" if you will.

Pacquiao's bravery did not go unnoticed.

In defeat, Pacquiao stood 10 feet tall—not only to his 44 million countrymen but also to billions more around the world watching the fight on TV.

He was beaten all right, but the setback was not as humiliating as say, the first round knockout suffered by Sonny Liston at the hands of Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali) the second time they met in the Six Pax.

Yet, while it's true that Pacquiao had lost by a unanimous decision, the identical scores of 115-113 by the three judges would touch to show that Morales won 7 rounds against Pacquiao's 5. It was that close. If had (fate name wrote.)

Had the head butt caused (or) in the fifth been ruled intentional by referee Joe Cortes, who knows the corresponding penalty against Morales might have changed the complexion of the fight.

And how about if Pacquiao had not suffered that ugly wound?

Yes fights with only one good eye, why that's like driving your car in the driving rain with the left wiper out of order and your car is a left-hand drive.

And how about if it were Morales who absorbed the eye injury (a wound...things might have turned out differently and maybe favored Pacquiao?

This is not an attempt to justify Pacquiao's defeat. As I said, we lost, I believe that wholeheartedly.

No, not that Pacquiao lacked his usual power to this fight. He might have been way off with his rhythm at times. But you saw him connect, especially in the 12th, where he nagged Morales a number of times with crisp blows while he went at it one last time with all his guns ablaze.

It was just that, the one big punch that he was known for never came. This was just not his day, fellas.

It was, alas, that Morales proved too slippery, classy if you will, to be caught flush on the chin by the famed Pacquiao lunch hallow punch.

Bottom line is, "El Terrible" had done his homework well against the "Too Slim." Meaning, Morales had fought his fight—and he did it well up to the very end. The 12th round heroism herself was Morales' way of saying, after he had scored the win, "It's show time, folks."

Morales delivered his script so flawlessly that he moved and glided unerringly early in every round, and then made his move toward the latter part of it with his own bursts of short (but, at times, jarred) Pacquiao.

That was the strategy I had feared most that's why I kept repeating here before the fight that, if Pacquiao failed to knock Morales out in five rounds, Morales would write an end to it after 12 rounds.

Peter Lee of Hong Kong Tea House, Jun Velasco and Gerry Garcia of Sunday PUSO1 and Ariel de Jesus of Toyota MO remembered that only too well.

Still, while we are in mourning, it is well to remember again the saying, "It's not in the risking but to the falling."

I still believe that from the ruins of his defeat, Pacquiao, only 26 years old, will rise like the phoenix.

We'll soon, that is.

James' 56 points can't rescue Cavs

TORONTO—LeBron James became the youngest player to score 56 points in an NBA game but his franchise-record 56 weren't enough to prevent the Toronto Raptors from beating the Cleveland Cavaliers, 108-98 on Sunday.

James easily surpassed his previous career best of 48 points, set Nov. 24 against Denver. However, he committed a key turnover with 16 seconds left and missed a pair of 3-point attempts in the final 3.4 seconds.

James finished 18-for-36 from the field and 14-for-21 from the line. He also had six 3-pointers, 13 rebounds and five assists, and his fast-paced style left fans in a bunch clad in the Cavaliers, outscoring Cleveland's reserves, 34-1.

At 20 years, 89 days old, James eclipsed Rick Barry as the youngest player to score 50 points. Barry was 22 years, 330 days old when he scored 57 for San Francisco against the New York Knicks.

James' point total also beat all the previous franchise records of 50 set by Wade Bleyzer against Cincinnati on Feb. 19, 1971.

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Tim Duncan sprained his ankle moments after the tip and did not return, and Detroit overcame a 16-point deficit to win a matchup of the last two NBA champions.

Chauncey Billups scored 22 points, including five straight late after the Spurs pulled within a point. Detroit (39 wins, 28 losses) has won 12 of 13.

COMPLETE RESULTS: Toronto 108, Cleveland 98; New Jersey 94, Indiana 85; Detroit 101, San Antonio 97; Minnesota 84, Boston 80; Indiana (less Jeffries) 104, Milwaukee (less Allen) 101; Dallas 102, LA Lakers 101.

AP

JAMES: Youngest player to score 50 points.

N.C. State eliminates Connecticut

WORCESTER, Massachusetts—Julius Hodge scored on a shocking drive through the lane with 4.3 seconds left to give North Carolina State a 68-66 victory over defending champion Connecticut on Sunday and send the Wolfpack to the round of 16 of the U. college basketball championship tournament.

North Carolina State, the 10th seed in the Syracuse Regional, advanced to the regional semifinals for the first time since 1989 and will play Wisconsin.

The Huskies' loss also was a setback for the Big East conference, which has had four teams so far, including a No. 2 seed and two No. 3 seeds.

Hodge was fouled by Ed Nelson on his drive and completed the three-point play. Marcus Williams' desperation 3-as the buzzer clicked.

AP

PERRY: Vijay goes on the tournament.

Federer crushes Hewitt

INDIAN WELLS, California—World number one Roger Federer produced another dominant display to crush number two Lleyton Hewitt, 6-2, 6-0, 6-0, in the final of the Pacific Life Open on Sunday.

In a coolly efficient and often spectacular demanding of the Australian, Federer never allowed Hewitt into the contest, controlling his opponent from the baseline and under the net.

"My game has a lot to do with footwork," Federer said. "When I'm moving well, I play well. This week I've played really well footwork-wise.

In attempting to spoil the rumbles once, the usually steady Hewitt took risks but the shot ran wide.

He registered 21 unforced errors, the same as Federer's, but the Swiss nailed 41 winners to only 10 from the Australian.

Hewitt said he injured toes on both his feet in his three-set victory over Andy Roddick in the semifinals and a questionable for next week's tournament in Miami.

The Australian left the court with the ball well, but wouldn't put together proper game plan.

"Roger's a tough guy," he said. "I probably went for a little more than I needed in this against a guy like Roger, his movement is unparalled."

Reuters

Annika tops playoff; Jenny 12th

SUNRYTYCKS MOUNTAIN, Arizona—Filipina Jennifer Rosales shot a two-under par 70 and teamed up tied for 12th in the $1.5 million Safeway International won by Annika Sorenstam on Sunday.

Rosales, winner of the inaugural SBA Open in Japan last year, finished with total and pocketed $22,500 (about P1.25M).

Lorena Ochoa, four strokes ahead with only three holes to play, still couldn't hold off Sorenstam who downed the Mexican in a playoff to win the $225,000 top prize.

Sorenstam posted a two-under par 70 to finish tied with Ochoa at 7-under 277 after 72 holes.

The world's top ranked player parred 18 in the playoff to win her second tournament to money this season and the 69th of her career.

Sorenstam has now won four events in a row and one of the last eight she has entered.

"I have the thrill of coming down the stretch and knowing that you have to hit a certain shot or a certain way," Sorenstam said. "That's really what gets me going." Ochoa's slide started with a double-bogey at the par-four 16th. At 17 she took bogey when her putt just lipped out, and bombed in the par-five 18th with her lead cut to one shot.

The 1995 LPGA Rookie of the Year's undoing throughout the tournament. She played it at two-over, with double-bogeys Saturday and Sunday.

AFP

Ateneo-La Salle scholarships up

THE ATENEO-DE-LA-LASALLE golf tournament is changing for the better this year.

Given the results recorded thus in the stars by FLET and Smart, the tourney will mean a lot more than a traditional decathlon among alumni and a chance for varsity players.

The Ateneo-La Salle battles till will also provide scholarships to two students...one in each prestigious institution—starting this coming school year after organizers forged a deal with Smart to outreach part of the operating cost for grants targeting young golfers all over the country.

The Ateneo-La Salle deal is scheduled on April 4 at the Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club, the country's biggest golf club located in Gen. Trias, Cavite. A separate activity program, open for players 60 years and above will be held on April 3 at the Alabang Country Club.

Be inquiries, call 926-3001 (Ateneo) and 525-6748/526-9012 (La Salle). Registration deadline is March 29.

Epson Cup 2 leveling meet ends today

EPSON Cup 2 will hold its final leveling contest today at the Filoteo Badminton Center.

Tournament director EG Lim will conduct the pivotal leveling beginning at 9:00 a.m. for PBCom Financial Group, Mandaluyong City. The leveling fee is P50.

Sanctioned by the Philippine Badminton Association, Epson Cup 2 will hold its qualifying rounds at the Olympic Badminton Club in Lim, Quezon City on April 9-10, while the semifinals and finals will be held at the Filoteo Badminton Center in San Juan on April 15-17.

Tournament chair Edwin Tiotuico said today's leveling was triggered by numerous requests of participants who failed the contests on March 12-13 and March 19-20.

"We added more to the number of participants who want to join and that spelled a tremendous success after the leveling session," said Tiotuico.

The event is sponsored by Shell, Wilson, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Orbusch, Apple Green, Kenko, Physio Cushion, Mizuno, Oishi, Magnolia, Mapa 100, 99.5 RT Wheyman, Milles, Fx.

A YOUNG participant shows her mettle.

2 squads out to break ice in Velo Challenge

TRIATHS International Convention Center (TICC) and Quezon City will try to get back on track at the resumption today of the First Philippine Velo Challenge at the newly refurbished Araneta Velodrome in Quezon City.

Unable to erase goals in the opening TICC, behind Wilo Gonzales of Cebu and by the versatile Rommel Lavina, will try to keep it aside with Elmer Abarca, Pedro Princesa and Wenan, all of which aim to host a gold medal rush Saturday.

Quezon City Arena Series climbed two joint gold medals while Hilde captured four titles to reach off their campaign in the event sponsored by the First Gentleman Foundation of lawyer Jose Miguel Arroyo and Atty. Daniel Ke. Hedda Mel I and Tom Filipino by.

The event, also backed by Sports Radio 918, starts at 8:30 a.m. and end around noon in the event which has Dagupan and the Philippine Sports Commission as major supporters and the Philippine Olympic Committee, Isuzu, DiMax, Abaci-Mix, San Miguel Corp., ADB Sports Olympic, Nissan Tiara, RED BPM, BMW, GOL Mill, Dodd's Subic and Investments Authority.

Big turnout for TM 9-Ball Champion's League

A BIG turnout of billiards hopefuls of all ages marked the start of registration for the pre-qualifying tournament of the TM 9-Ball Champion's League, a first-of-its-kind 9-ball billiards tournament which kicks off April 11 at the SM Supermall in San Fernando, Pampanga.

Organizer Sel by Nation Tuazon, who also put up the Metropolitan Basketball Association (MBA) some years back, said a big number of participants has entered the pre-qualifying set April 2 and 3 to select members of the Pampanga team for the tournament proper.

Qualifying tourneys will also be held on the same dates in Bangalore and the cities of Tuaig and Pampanga.

Teach Mobile, a believer in the Filipino athlete talent, launched the league in an effort to find contenders to Efren "Bata" Reyes and Francisco "Django" Bustamante.

Eight teams have joined the first series of the TM 9-Ball Champion's League, organized by Jonah Sports and Tuazon's Basketball Enterprises. The tournament, backed by Accel and aired over BC 13 from 9-11pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, will host Dumaguete and Cotronia in Cebu, Mandaluyo, and Cebu.

Cantor Sen. Ayong Maliksi, Bandaque Vice Mayor Anju Vilgna and Manila Sports Council Chairs Chels Ali Mitchia will act as team managers of their respective squads.

Dumaguete, Bangalore, Malaki, Pasig and Batangas are the other teams in the event.

LAWYER Jose Antonio, ALFI corporate secretary Prem Bravante, ALFI president Sen. Boy Rabaca of Rotaract International Richard Aguilar and Makati Club Phoenix and Ambassador Francisco Alajide, director and governor-elect of Rotary International 383-B, list the ceremonial toss-off of the recent Alay-Lakad/Pasodobles for...pdf/tournaments.

SPORTSWATCH

High hopes for Lady Eagles

HOPES is enough for a major team title for Mapua in the coming school year. After the Lady Eagles captured the mythical basketball championship in Intercollegiate City recently—the first of three title bonuses in the annual event—athletic director Jose Castellanos is heading forward to ensure hopeful 2005-2006. Castellanos said among the LAAP feature fill cream to within sight, and so to retaining the National championship crown. "I'm always confident to carry great of the Lady Eagles, especially after their triumph on Sunday," Mapua Cardinals Coach Castellanos, to Buenaventura, the Lady Eagles, reminiscent to Kristine and LAAP features17, stormed their way to the title, finishing all their opponents in less than 30 minutes. "They played the games of their lives," said head coach John Flores. Sophomore Cecile Favores was instrumental in leading the Lady Eagles' offense, while Rhea Dimaculangan and Jessa Mendoza and psychologist Marissa Sanchez.

Jrs badminton tires banner field

A RECORD festival 320 players will vie for top honors in the two-day-long, 2005 Badminton Association of the Philippines (BAP) Jrs. Championships, which formally opens at 9 a.m. tomorrow at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum. The record number is the most in the annual event—officials director Jose Castellanos Jr. is heading forward to ensure hopeful 2005-2006. Castellanos said among the LAAP feature fill cream to within sight, and so to retaining the National championship crown. "I'm always confident to carry great of the Lady Eagles, especially after their triumph on Sunday," Mapua Cardinals Coach Castellanos, to Buenaventura, the Lady Eagles, reminiscent to Kristine and LAAP features17, stormed their way to the title, finishing all their opponents in less than 30 minutes. "They played the games of their lives," said head coach John Flores. Sophomore Cecile Favores was instrumental in leading the Lady Eagles' offense, while Rhea Dimaculangan and Jessa Mendoza and psychologist Marissa Sanchez.

Bigan Eco Adventure Race April 6-8

KAGAN City—The Cotapan-Bigan Eco Adventure Race 2005 is set for April 6-8 here. The race course is set along a 300-kilometer adventure terrain covering rivers, mountains, coastlines and mangroves. The three-day race will include trail running, mountain biking, mountain biking, trekking, canoeing, paddling, river sections and other outdoor activities as well. Team team will have a maximum of three racers while a mixed race consists of the opposite sex. Registration fee is P7,000 per team of four and race director assistant staff, equipment rental, camp site and accommodation. Prizes are P15,000, P10,000, P5,000 and P3,000 for the overall first, fourth and fifth, respectively. For inquiries, call 0921-32 88222 063-222-0123 or log on to www.geocities.com/race.bigan.

Baico leads age group winners

TAGUIG City—Black Sulos, Mike Santiago and Andrew Tan the dominant their respective duels in the initial leaderboard of the Eco Electric Wheels' Bike Challenge Duathlon Championship at the PGA course, Plaza Dilao, Pasay, over the weekend. Baico defeated Mike by 6-0, 6-2, at the 30-year category while 14-year-old Mike Santiago defeated Jose Manuel Bernal, 7-5, 5-0, for the 20-and-Under/Cadet Equestrian, 6-2, 6-1, in the 18-year-old boys category. Samantha Gonzales proved her winning for Hyatt Libas, 6-2, 6-2, in the girls category of the event, supported by Bataan Governor Abner Mercado. Prizes is the official fuel and sealed.

Para sa Bayan 7-Bullstag Derby

GAMETIME: industry leader Thunderbird Horse Feeds and Breeding is all set for the 7-Bullstag Derby, a racing derby to be staged by the National Federation of Equestrian Breeders, Clubhouse "Para sa Bayan" Bullstag 7-Bullstag Derby. Bennett's proceeds will go to the Philippine Sports Commission to help raise funds for the 23rd Southeast Asian Games to be held later this year. The event was conceptualized upon the intervention of Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose Cojuangco Jr. and Philippine Sports who was the presiding officer and guest speaker during the World Induction of Officers for 2005. Set at the Metrotech Grounds, the Derby will have two separate three-bullstag eliminations on April 16 and 17, anchored by the 6 bullstag finals on April 17. Those interested may contact their local horse racing centers.

RACING 2 GO

AT ULLF 01 MR. 000

Race 1—1. Dr. S 2. Clover Cookie 3. Sweet Rosie

Race 2—1. Lucky Boy 2. Mahogany 3. Shotgun Cookie

Race 3—1. Just A Moment 2. Darling 3. Good Instinct

Race 4—1. Diamond T. Mitch Magic

Race 5—1. Rapid 2. Jolliman

Race 6—1. Superwoman 2. Silent Striker 3. Red Devil

Race 7—1. Just 2. Spill Operation 3. Wonderboy

Race 8—1. Fighter 2. Secret Admirer 3. Tornado

Recycling seemed to be the program's sub-theme, with familiar gowns resurfacing on new bodies

HOST Paulo Bedinoza conducts question-answer portion.

RICAMARIE Ann Taylor, center, in the outfit worn by former titlist Karla Bautista during the parade two weeks ago.

Palm Sunday finish for Bb. Pilipinas 2005

By Harold R. Cruz and Lennie Ledesa
Photos by Jim Bitas-Pascual

THE RUNNING Pilipinas coronation ceremony on Saturday night at the Araneta Coliseum lasted until the early hours of Palm Sunday.

It was already midnight when last year's winners, Muntinlupa Rep. (Ms. Pilipinas-Universe), Melissa Ann Ilayan (International) and Karla Bautista (World), did their farewell walks.

Then it took another half hour before the new queens—Gemma Cabrera (Universe), Carlene Aguilar (World), Precious Lara Quigaman (International)—could be crowned and, finally, presented to the media.

The delayed telecast on GMA 7 that night was almost four hours long. The wait became the gays were encouraging long.

At one point, a group in the audience shouted: "Bruhi, palagay na Ok'o Palm Sunday already!" They were addressing Paulo Bedinoza, who co-hosted with Richard Gomez and Raymond Gutierrez.

During one of the long gaps, Paulo advised the restless audience, "Save your energy. Mahalin po kasi ang gabi (It's going to be a long night.)." The crowd, blowing plastic horns and waving streamers and placards, were hysterically cheering for their candidates.

The program started with a production number featuring the 23 candidates. Halfway through the show, Jaypee John Hughes and Phyxy and The Illusions serenaded the candidates while the gals were showing off their evening gowns. The Stalwarth Girls presented a "surprise" number strictly for the live audience—it was not aired on television.

Sleeping seemed to be a subtheme. Certain gowns and crowns looked familiar. Reminds him Taylor's purple gown, for instance, was the same one that Sharmaine Arnaiz wore during the candidate's parade around the Araneta Center two Sundays ago.

The gold number sported by Malaysian during her farewell walk was the gown said to have cost 70 to Mrs Ahgay's bid for the Miss Universe 2000 crown in Uyanta.

Arlene one final walk, Ilayan appeared in a red outfit similar to the one she wore when she was last seen.

Miss Tourism International 2004 and Miss Tourism World 2003 Michelle Ilayan, who was one of the judges that night, was seen in the wings greeting the different wave in the candidates' parade.

The Binibining Pilipinas Charities Inc. seems to have laid to rest the gigantic crowns that previous queens wore. But the crown put on Aguilar's head was the same one that Miriam Quiambao and four other Ms. Pilipinas-Universe winners used.

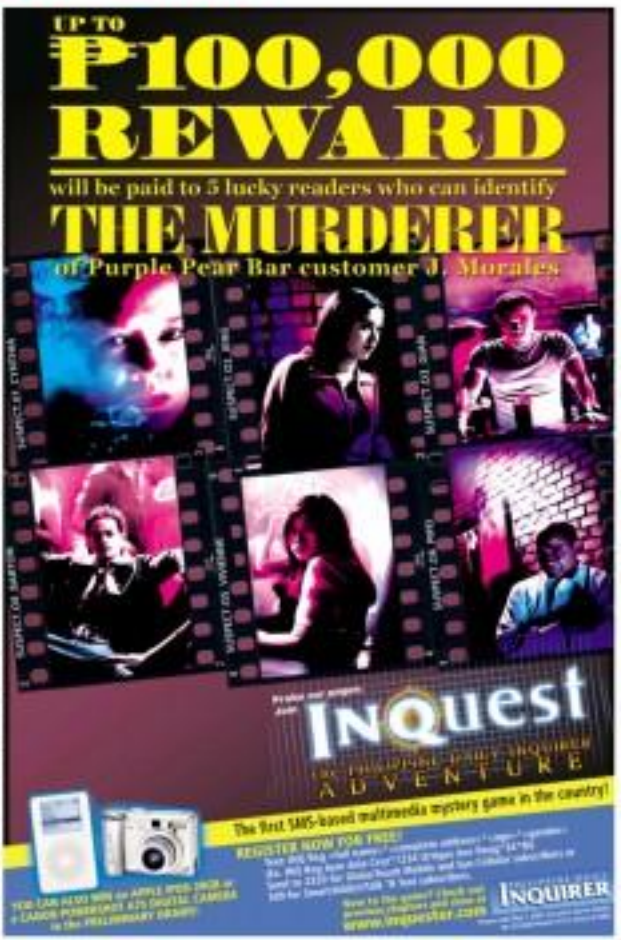
Wendy Makin, first runner-up and recipient of the Department of Tourism's Binibining Pilipinas-Tourism award, wore the crown previously used by Anna Domaine, Binibining Pilipinas-Look of the Year 1995.

Among the show hosts, Paulo was the most effective. He was relaxed, handled awkward problems well, and came up with the funniest remarks for the audience.

Richard Gomez tried to engage the audience in conversation with him. "Bruce in the question and answer portion," he said at one point. "We should've asked Bedinoza Marquez to come up here."

If that was a joke, no one caught it.

RAYMOND Gutierrez shares up the audience.



TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2005

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

B1

BUSINESS

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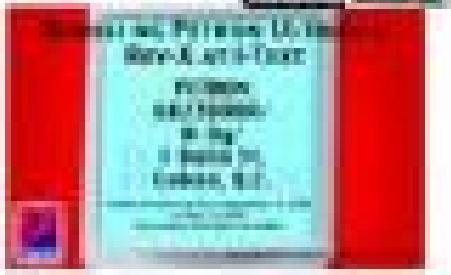
Assistant Editor Connie S. Bartolome



IMF urges BSP to raise interest rates

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund wants the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to start raising interest rates to curb the upward movement in consumer prices, projecting that inflation would again overshoot the official ceiling of 5 to 6 percent this year.

"The IMF said in a statement that to dismiss more vigorously the persistence of above-target inflation for a prolonged period might lead to an upward revision in inflationary expectations."

Last year the inflation rate averaged 5.5 percent, also exceeding the ceiling of 5 to 6 percent, but the BSP kept its key policy rates steady as it believed monetary policy would not have been effective in arresting supply-side shocks.

The Fund also said the near-term outlook for the Philippine economy is clouded by the uncertainties around oil prices and that the rapid 6-percent growth in 2004 was unlikely to be maintained given the slowing global demand in the information technology sector and rising interest rates.

"There are uncertainties on both the upside and downside, depending on oil price developments, the strength of world demand and weather conditions (which affect agriculture production)," the IMF said.

The IMF noted agriculture supply shocks had been the root cause of the country's failure to meet the inflation target in 2004. "Oil has a large impact and hits prices, followed by the surge in vegetable prices and the weak labor market," it said.

But the Fund pointed to a number of signs that price pressures were spreading.

"A number of directors supported the approval of the BSP's decision to clearly signalize inflationary pressures—in particular, weigh the evidence for inflation having become more generalized—and to take prompt actions as needed," the report said.

"Many other directors, however, took the view that the balance has already tipped, and that no increase in policy rates is required to guide inflationary expectations down," it said.

The report lamented that despite the strong economic growth in 2004, wealth distribution remains to worsen and unemployment and underemployment remain high.

The Fund nevertheless welcomed the efforts being made by the administration to try out a comprehensive package of reforms aimed at addressing the country's long-standing problems in the fiscal, power and banking sectors as well as in reducing its high debt levels.

"Notwithstanding these near-term steps, directors cautioned that, with the major part of the reform agenda still unfinished, vulnerabilities arising from the country's large external debt and financing requirements remained high," the report said.

"Thus, the economy remains susceptible to external shocks, especially changes in market sentiment and increases in global interest rates

(see p.)

Homegrown coffee firm expands overseas

By Ronnel W. Domingo

HOMEGROWN coffee shop Figaro Coffee Co. is considering to go public as it pushes for its expansion in China, the Middle East and South and Asia, according to its chief executive.

Figaro CEO Glen Sabio said in a press briefing the company was looking at an IPO within a year and a half to two.

"But we have to get our house in order first before we could do that," Sabio said.

At the same time, she said Figaro was laying out up to P600,000 to P1.5 million for each of its three key locations in Shanghai, China, and a third in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Aside from that, Sabio said Figaro was also planning to put up stores in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.

Figaro has about 50 stores nationwide, of which at least 20 are company-owned while the rest are franchises.

In the second half of 2004 alone, Figaro opened eight stores in Ilo Ilo, Laguna, Magsaysay Center in Manila, Ortigas 2 Building in Makati, Pond Arcade along Commonwealth Avenue, QB City Complex along Biñan Avenue in Quezon City, Bonifacio in Global Metropolitan City, Club Industry Sports Center in Lipa, Cubao in Quezon City and Rockwell City.

Figaro was established in 1999 based on the concept of a complete resto where the guests could get their coffee and coffee-making paraphernalia.

Sabio said Figaro is keen to invest its overseas presence into one complete with P10 to P15 good of being a Filipino coffee company that could compete internationally as well as promoting local and global awareness of Philippine coffee.

Figaro offers 12 blends of coffee made of "only the best, handpicked Philippine Arabica [beans] from the best coffee farms in the country."

According to the Department of Trade and Industry, the country's coffee exports rose in volume by 1.05 percent to 1,700 metric tons in 2004 from 7,40 tons, said production remains among traditional growers.

The DTI said Philippine coffee exports were reaching a wider market due to the government institutes of traditional exporters like Brazil as a new entrant would prove very high.

In previous years, the combined coffee production of 81 countries posted a 1.43 percent decline to 102.5 million bags in 2003 from 113.99 million bags in 2002, according to the London-based International Coffee Organization.

The decrease resulted in an upward on world coffee prices, which benefited coffee-exporting countries like the Philippines, the DTI said.

Coffee exports—in the form of processed or instant coffee, roasted or ground coffee, and green beans—are shipped to Japan, Saudi Arabia, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Palau, Greece and Papua New Guinea.

Manila Water dammed by falling market

TWO WEEKS ago, I uttered an infidel and last week committed an alibi so absurd that I am sure that nobody believed a single word of it, nor even they uttered to Allah, it was unnerving to hear I hope so. The truth was that I did it only to add bite and spice to my column and to validate it as it was colorful.

I know that the PERSD was horrendously overbought because the degree of risk recorded 98 on a scale of 0-100. This indicated that the only direction the market could possibly go was down. More than likely localized correspond and that inflation figures were certain to be at a record level due to the price of petrol, soon rising weekly.

The unemployment figure was up last year at 11.3 percent and a further 15.4 percent were under-employed. Overall, in the last quarter of 2004 demand for 5.4 percent of the quarter remain likely to be affected by 50 Mbps according to the weather forecasters.

Third there, overvalued in a long time, seeing going from up—four to one day—and there was a spate of IPOs lined up. All these factors pointed to the market topping out.

I was also convinced that the Senate and Congress would not agree on a VAT package before the Easter 3-week recess after having its partisanship ill-present.

My conclusion was so negative that the Libyan, who now—understandably—named Dr Doc and heir of the Million Dollar Baby, pleaded with me not to publish it but I count panic selling. I was also depressed about my sex life, which is now on a missed body search in the airport and the second-stringer Spice Girl.

I did, however, tell subscribers to get out of the market the following morning. As it happened, the market opened 9-points higher before closing 13-points lower, as they were able to get out right at the top of the cycle. I was disappointed that the market only fell as far as that week. But last week, matters came to a head when the hostile disappearance in the United States to match the Benjamin Disraeli-Bear Stearns' threw caused to blow up smith and churches during Holy Week.

Last Friday, the market finally caved in and fell 58 points to 2,060, which was 220 points below the level which caused a HELL signal.

I received a number of emails and phone calls from happy subscribers, but I felt sorry for those people who managed to get Manila Water, requiring to sell the shares at P6. It opened at P7.50, but finished the day at P6.80, closing up at P6.95. It should recover to date sooner.

The President is calling a 3-day special session on March 31 to impress the lawmakers about the urgency to pass the VAT bill as it is the most important of the 8 bills.

To the task, there will remain in principle, but I doubt whether the will get value due to taking for. In all probability, she will end up with another watered-down bill that is better than nothing, but will not necessarily impress foreign investors.

After one-month of net money coming into the country buying stocks, bonds and peso, foreign investors have started to overhaul their investment of the Philippines and the stock market and the currency is reflecting this. There is still time to step on outflow of funds, but the downturn is more to set quickly.

I was pleasantly surprised to learn that SMIC sees four issues oversubscribed as local investors increased little interest in a stock sell-up on P70 of 125, often its main asset in terms of book value. SMIC is selling on 639 of the then 1.5. Obviously foreign brokers decided to get up for a good stock with a high degree of liquidity. It is the largest issue since Petron.

Investors are believe real mining companies can be doing badly when coal is selling in a very high price, much higher than last year. I am beginning to wonder about the accuracy of the profit forecasts given by DMC in Mosquito. The 2004 results should be known by now as it is almost the end of March and all other companies have reported their annual results.

DMC should swallow those forecasts. If they do, they will report an income of 4.5 and should recover quickly. If they do not, then they have some explaining to do. DMC was by far the largest seller of over 1 million shares last Friday. But on Monday, they bought 500,000 and crossed 950,000. The price recovered to P6.80.

A long overdue bond market will be running up very shortly and the public will be able to deal in modest amounts of Treasury stocks. At present, we are almost the only stock exchange that does not have a bond income market.

Dealings start in Stocks in SMIC, probably around the ellis price of P200. Nearly all of it was subscribed overseas and I doubt whether anyone bought it for a quick profit. Nevertheless, there will be huge block sales and some big winners could reach out of time frame.

Our research department has detected the prospectus and have calculated that the quote of stocks are worth P86 billion, and the unquoted holdings in Bloc Mist. 3M Hotel and others are worth an additional P62 billion. Anybody—other than insiders, they can't—are the net asset value to be P333 per share so that the IPO price represents a 25 percent discount.

Their advice was to subscribe if you were prepared to hold long term, but they did not recommend it to short term punters. I think that is correct.

My wife unexpectedly became nervous, but I said, "Oh can't become it's Lent." "Oh," she said. "To whom and for how much?"

She is off to her village to visit her folks, who will be celebrating the 100th birthday of the oldest Ati tribesman, grandchildren and great grandchildren will be there.

Although her eight and bearing are not too good, he still has all his faculties, which is more than I can say about a certain college professor. I am not going because I cannot afford the airfare for my wife, her children and cousins. Besides, they don't have an extra dressing, and I cannot stand the heat. Still, I think that reaching 100 is a wonderful achievement. mrbearbull@hotmail.com

Mr. Bearbull

Bear Necessities

Consunji eyes stake in Maynilad

PSE posted ₱47.3-M income as of Feb. '05

By Elizabeth L. Sánchez

BOOSTED by new initial public offerings, the Philippine Stock Exchange generated a net income of ₱47.3 million as of end-February, exceeding the half-year income in 2004 of ₱39 million.

In a report to stockholders, PSE president Francis Lim said that operating revenues for the first two months already hit ₱79.3 million, about 57 percent of last year's figure.

The hike in PSE's income was primarily due to the initial public offerings of Manila Water Company and SM Investments Corp., and increased trading in the bond issues.

Lim said the previous PSE board was so optimistic about this year's market that it already declared a stock dividend of 5% a share.

Aside Ltd. Zone were the first IPO for the year, with its shares closing at ₱6.90 per share on its debut trading.

MWC raised ₱4.4 billion from the offering of 740.35 million shares at ₱6.00 apiece.

SM Investments Corp. (SMIC) of retail magnate Henry Sy, on the other hand, sold 125 million shares.

It is now is the biggest IPO since 1996 when oil firm Petron Corp. sold shares to the public.

SMIC will issue 926.75 billion (83.85 million) from the sale of 13.35 million of its shares at ₱70 each.

About 105 million of these shares are new shares, while 19 million shares are held by existing shareholders.

The total shares to be offered make up about 21 percent of the company's total outstanding shares.

PSE is working on the listing of more shares over the stock exchange to expand the capital market and further empower investors.

Last year, PSE recorded ₱137.6 million in operating revenues, up 23 percent from ₱111.7 million the previous year.

Net income, on the other hand, reached ₱39.4 million, an increase of 46 percent from the 2003 net income ₱13.7 million.

By Christine A. Gaylan

THE CONSTRUCTION firm DM Consing Inc., the ex-Pedro Corp. and the Ayala's Bonifacio Holdings owners of Isla Telecommunications Inc. (Infocom), have expressed their interest to each acquire stakes in Maynilad Water Services Inc.

According to Maynilad sources, the groups have inquired about the water utility's financial report and system capabilities.

Also, the investors are reportedly keen on boosting the water utility's new tariff rate, which has been approved recently, the source said.

Maynilad's new tariff rate took effect in January.

Since then, the water firm's customers have been paying an additional P16.19 per cubic meter.

The tariff would generate an additional revenue of P1.5 billion to P1 billion for the company, a study of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System conducted.

Although the company lacks the capability to acquire new commercial loans due to its poor imperialization, Maynilad executive of infrastructure "will ensure that the required expenditure projects of the company will be in place," an MWSS official explained.

The source added that the interested companies might even acquire the equity should needed by the concessionaire, which the Philippine government, through the MWSS, would have to secure.

According to government sources privy to the negotiations with the Ayala-led group, Maynilad Water Holdings Inc. (Maynilad), the government-led MWSS had the smaller block, the area some concessionaire has also offered board seats to its candidates in order to expose business and experience.

The MWSS is on top of Maynilad's list of creditors with an exposure of P6 billion representing unpaid concession fees.

The company's other creditors, accounting for the remaining P10 billion in obligations, include Credit Suisse (Spain), Indosuez Merchant Bank Asia Ltd., Citibank NA, Bankers Bank (S) and BNP Paribas, Equitable PCI Bank, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. and the Development Bank of the Philippines.

Under Maynilad's proposal, the MWSS would be given control of about 40 percent of the new concession area.

Under a proposed amendment to the Concession Agreement, the company to be controlled by the MWSS would be called the New Maynilad.

Key government agencies and the banks creditors will be in Maynilad's seven-member board of directors.

Benpres Holdings and its foreign partners, Ondeo Philippines Inc., will remain as minority shareholders.

Maynilad has proposed a debt-for-equity swap deal with its creditors to settle more P15 billion in remaining obligations.

Maynilad's bank creditors have rejected a debt for-equity swap deal and opted to get paid within the next seven years is to

Disclosures

Manila Jockey Co. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 12, 2 p.m. at the Manila Jockey Club, Makati Ave., Makati City. Registration for this purpose of stockholders as entitled to notice of said with at the meeting is March 11.

MRT-7 Broadcasting Corp. will hold an investors and analysts' meeting on March 31, 3 p.m. at the Training Hall B, 11F SLI Communications Center, Epi Fragrance Ave., Bonifacio City.

LUCKY the board of the **Philippine Stock Exchange Inc.** elects Peter Favila as chair, Vicente Lee Lim as president, Alejandro G. Lacson as vice and Maria Encarnacion as corporate secretary.

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. confirmed reports that its subsidiary, PLDT Global Corp., is engaged in preliminary discussions with potential partners in Singapore regarding a joint venture arrangement for the provision of mobile virtual network operator services. **Compiled by Kay Lapeña, PSE Research**

PSALM opens bid for Calaca plant

By Abigail L. Vo

THE POWER Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. has invited interested firms to bid for the 500-megawatt (MW) Hermosa-Calaca coal-fired thermal power plant in Calaca.

PSALM, the second Big Nepacon generation plant to be placed on the auction block after the sale of the 600-MW Masinloc coal-fired power plant in Zambales last year.

In a bid invitation published yesterday in newly-accredited Philippine Star and Business Mirror, PSALM said the bidding will be limited to firms that would submit their letters of interest by 5 p.m. of April 8.

Upon submission of their EOIs, prospective bidders will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement, and pay a non-refundable participation fee of $1,000 to get the bid-

ding documents.

The package includes all the assets of the station, and the bidding procedures.

The due diligence study of the power plant is scheduled from April 4 to May 13, with a pre-bid conference set for April 14.

The bid deadline for submission of bids has been set for noon of May 16.

As with the other auctions of generating plants, Sapocor requires all potential bidders to submit a bid security equivalent to 10 percent of their total bid price, in the form of an irrevocable letter of credit from a PSALM-accredited reputable local bank.

The bid security of the winning bidder will be subsequently used as performance security, which will guarantee "prompt, faithful and complete performance of its obligations" under the transaction.

For this auction, PSALM will be using the two-envelope bidding system, where the financial and technical bids will be submitted separately.

PSALM has so far sold five operational Nepacor plants, four by auction and one by negotiated sale.

These are the 70-MW Tiwi-cave plant in Albay for $1.37 million, the 1.8-MW Agusan plant in Bukidnon for $1.33 million, the 1.4-MW Bais plant in Camiguin for $1.01 million, the 1.4-MW Cotabato plant in Sarangani for $1041,0.45, the 1.2-MW Lobo plant in Batangas for $1.42 million, and the 600-MW Masinloc coal-fired plant in Zambales for $765.76 million.

Sapocor expects to complete the privatization of its plants by April next year.

Saudi Aramco won't sell Petron stake

SAUDI Arabian Oil Co. has no plans to sell its 40-percent stake in the Philippines' largest oil refiner Petron Corp., saying Saudi Oil Minister Ali al-Naimi said on Monday.

Al-Naimi, who is on a three-day visit to the Philippines, made the statement after consumer groups and some local legislators asked the government to buy back Saudi Aramco's stake in Petron so it can cap domestic oil prices.

The Philippine oil companies do not need government approval to raise pump prices of their oil products if crude prices shoot up in the world market as if the peso falls against the dollar.

"We are not investors and we don't want to interfere in a major investment in the Philippines," Al-Naimi told reporters after meeting with Philippine energy officials.

In 1993, the Philippine government sold 40 percent of Petron to Saudi Aramco in 1993 and a small portion to the public. It retained a 40 percent stake in the oil firm. Aramco currently supplies up to 70 percent of the oil requirements of Petron. **Reuters**

RP foreign debt eased to $54.8B in end-2004

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES' total foreign debt, classified by public sector accounts, dropped by 4.44 percent to $54.8 billion as of end-December from $57.4 billion a year ago, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported yesterday.

Compared to a quarter ago, the country's external debt likewise fell by 1.85 percent from $55.8 billion at end-September 2004.

"The decline in the debt stock was achieved as some principal liabilities were retired. Both public and private sectors recorded net repayments during the year, which meant that principal payments exceeded new loans or inflows," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said.

Those repayments negated the large upward foreign exchange revaluation adjustments in December brought to the weakening of the US dollar against other major currencies that comprises the debt stock such as the Japanese yen and the euro.

"The continuing acquisition of Philippine investment securities by Philippine residents also created a further reduction of the debt stock," Buenaventura said.

Many residents buy foreign-denominated Philippine bonds. These are now counted as part of domestic rather than foreign debt.

The country's debt stock remained heavily liquid-based medium- to-long-term (MLT) accounts, which accounted for nearly 91 percent of the total. These loans, which had original maturities of more than one year, had a weighted average maturity of 17 years.

Public sector loans had a longer average maturity of 20 years compared to the private sector's average of 11 years.

Public sector loans accounted for 60 percent or $37.9 billion of the total debt stock, of which the national government and the state-owned National Power Corp. accounted for 97.5 percent and 10.0 percent, respectively.

Private sector liabilities, on the other hand, amounted to $16.9 billion, of which almost a fifth consisted of bank loans.

"The country's creditor profile remained well-diversified, with official creditors comprising 46 percent of total; foreign holders of bonds and notes, 28.9 percent; and banks and other financial institutions, 20.4 percent," Buenaventura said.

In terms of currency mix, the country's external debt remained largely denominated in US dollars at 51.2 percent and Japanese yen, 30 percent.

Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima said the government was considering to diversify its credit risk by increasing the borrowings denominated in euro.

"If you look at interest rates in Europe, the rates there are lower. In fact our spread there is probably 30-75 basis points lower. It's another possibility of lowering our cost but that's something that we're still reviewing," he said.

Purisima said the finance department's view was that the euro's appreciation would not likely be sustained because even a trade manipulator, a stronger currency would make Europeans exports less competitive in the long run.

IMF urges BSP to raise...

From page B1

and objective," it said.

Even with the benign global conditions, the directors assessed that the Philippines could find it difficult to assert its large external borrowing needs "should the reform momentum falter."

The IMF reiterated the importance of a strong and front-loaded fiscal adjustment so as to avoid a strong rejection by the market about the government's commitment to tackle the fiscal problem.

In particular, the report cited the need to pass further tax measures with a clear and sweeping revenue yield and also called for reforms in other areas such as power and financial sectors as well as pension funds.

The IMF supported measures to raise the value-added tax (VAT) rate and expand certain exemptions, saying these would allow an aggressive upfront reduction in the deficit as well as some additional spending on priority areas, including infrastructure and social programs.

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8 Keys To Your Different Interests

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Gov't closely watches rising cement prices

By Roncal M. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry has stepped up its monitoring of cement prices as the continuing upturn has pushed the price up to P101 per 40-kilogram bag or 6% percent higher over a three-month period.

Trade Secretary Jose S. Isidro said his department was closely coordinating with its regional and provincial offices nationwide in monitoring the trend in cement prices to be able to take the corrective steps in holding any unusual price increases.

Demand for cement in the country peaks during the summer months.

BTI data show that, in the first two weeks of March, the prevailing average retail prices of Portland cement nationwide went up slightly by 0.29 percent from P100.60 to P100.93 per bag compared to the fourth week of February.

The retail price of cement remained constant for all the other regions nationwide, ranging from P101 to P105 per 40-kg bag, except for Region IX where prices increased from P99 to P104 a bag.

Industry officials have said increases in retail prices of cement since January were due to the increase in the cost of electricity, coal and other production inputs, aside from transportation costs.

Isidro, in an earlier interview, said certain factors like the increases in energy costs might be understandable as industry players say this accounts for 60 percent of the variable cost in production.

He said the cement industry was power-intensive and uses big amounts of coal and lumber fuel to run declining power plants. These expenses are eventually passed on to consumers.

Also, local cement manufacturers are seeking an operation of the P13.60-a-bag safeguard duty on gray Portland cement, which expires on Dec. 9.

BIR to tap scouts for tax operations

By Doris C. Dumlao

BALAGTASING, through main revenue collecting agency, Bureau of Internal Revenue has entered up with the country's 600,000-strong boy and girl scouts as possible allies to eventually help drive against tax evaders.

"Operation Erik," launched by President Macapagal-Arroyo, Senator Investing Ernie Pacheco and BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno at the Ekonfil in Ekid in Makati yesterday, was expected to help the BIR achieve its revenue goals this year.

"The estimated leakage from corruption is about P200 billion and a big portion of that is from commercial establishments. That is why we are focusing on that," Parayno said.

The boy/girl scouts would affix BIR stickers on an estimated cash register and point of sales machines to ensure the possible submission of gross receipts from these machines.

The stickers contain certificate of their assembly sales reports, and customers of their right to demand a receipt.

The scouts will also be deputized by the BIR as special law, and will be tapped to distribute flyers explaining the mechanics of the electronic sales reporting system.

"We hope to improve the credibility that we'll need can goal with this one," Parayno said in presser at the project launching yesterday.

The Petitioner, Pacheco and Parayno led the scouts in affixing stickers at various establishments across the Ayala-led small streets.

Parayno said these cash registers would be installed in the BIR's tax mapping system so that tax payments could easily be compared with actual sales output.

The BIR Commissioner said the project was launched in time for the summer, so that the boy/girl scouts could even help the BIR catch taxevading merchants over the next two months.

LOW-CALORIE food guide /C4

LIFESTYLE

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY 3BU • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

A biblical healthy diet?

CORY QUINTO

All ancient healthy eating plan now help you live longer and better. Who would have thought that thousand of years ago, someone fashioned by God?

Dr. Don Colbert, in his frustrating book "What Would Jesus Eat," provides us with both biblical and medical insights on his diet.

Are you ready to make a new lifestyle choice in a God-inspired way?

Key questions

Before embarking on this new lifestyle decision, ask yourself these questions:

"Why do I eat this?"

"Would Jesus eat this?"

Sanctified Law

The Jews had the foundation for Jesus' food choices—the same law God gave to the Israelites through Moses.

Genesis 1:29 - Initially, God promoted vegetarianism for our health. "See I have given you every herb of the earth and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food."

Genesis 3:18 - "I have given every green herb for food." Note: from Adam to Noah, the average life span was phenomenal. Adam, 930 years; Seth, 912 years; Enos, 905 years; Jared, 962 years; Methuselah, 969 years; Abraham, 175 years; Moses, 120 years.

It is suggested that after the flood, man was introduced into the diet and the oxygen component of the air was reduced.

Clean, unclean meats

Leviticus 11:1ff - "These are the animals which you may eat ... having cloven hoofs and chewing the cud ... you shall not eat the camel ... hare ... swine ..."

Deuteronomy 14:4ff - "... you may eat the ox, sheep, goat, deer, gazelle, roe deer, wild goat, mountain goat, antelope, mountain sheep ..."

Bread of life

Mark 6:13 - "Give us this day our daily bread ..." Jesus made a direct reference to manna (which is believed to mean "what is it?", the question on people's minds when it fell from heaven). Manna appeared like small seeds. When ground finely and baked into cakes, it tasted like "wafers made with honey" (Num. 11:8; Ex. 16:31).

Whole grains are good

Luke 6:1 - "... He went through the grain fields ... And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands." Jesus ate bran, wheat whole grain, barley.

For you consider:

Choose whole-grain products (breads, pasta, bagels, muffins, pretzels).

"You may also finely the grain ... wheat and barley grain can be sprouted as they are high in vitamin C which has excellent oxygen.

Fresh fish

Jesus worked miracles with fish. He good gifts.

Matthew 14: 16-21 - "... took seven loaves and a few little fish" Note: The little fish may have been sardines from the freezing family.

Jesus earlier part of the Bible, it says:

"... whatever out of all that are in the waters whatever ... has fins and scales, whatever does not have fins or scales that shall be an abomination to you." Lev. 11:9-12

Shrimp, sea catfish, monkfish, swordfish, clingfish, shark, flatfish, fish, oysters, clams, crab, lobsters, clams, mackerel, sardine, scallop. (Jay: scales from the sea remain in the flesh of shell fish)

Note: those fish are good sources of essential nutrients including omega-3 fatty acids. Jesus most likely ate His fish cooked, not raw.

Unclean meat

With no fears, Jesus ate lean lamb (parting) and did not eat pork nor did He drink the blood of slaughtered animals. (Pork was considered unclean for most pigs were known to eat their own feces, garbage and decaying flesh.) Kosher meat, which is different from regular meat, is prepared following strictly the Torah (God's orders) law given to Moses, which explained the proper way to slaughter animals with the least pain and drained of its blood.

Poultry and eggs

Deuteronomy 14:20 - "... you may eat all clean birds ..." (chicken, geese, duck, quail, dove, turkey, pigeon ...)

The Jesus diet:

Beans, lentils legumes, whole grains, lean meats, freshly cooked fish, vegetables, fruits, poultry, yogurt, cheese and butter sparingly, garlic, onions, leeks, cabbage, broccoli, onions, wine, cauliflower, tomatoes, olives, olive oil, fruits, sparingly.

The best breads eaten during this time were a pita-type bread made with olive oil.

Water as beverage

Jesus drank water, his favorite beverage. The drinking habits of Jesus, as suggested by the Bible, may have included water, juices, herbal teas and some alkali. In those days, we read there was no evidence that He drank excessively and wine also used as medicine.

In the Last Supper, Jesus lifted a cup of wine and said, "... This cup is the new covenant in My Blood" (1 Cor. 11:25). But whether the fruit of the vine (Matt 26:27-29) actually meant unfermented or fermented wine we cannot be sure (email).

Drained bowels?

Jesus' main dessert was fruits—grapes, figs, pomegranates, dates, apricots, apples, raisins, melons, berries, nuts. Honey was used as sweetener.

Sharing Bible approach

Jesus walked a lot—21,000 miles in His lifetime (including his public ministry and travels from Egypt to Nazareth). On the average, he walked 10-20 miles daily (remember that the distance around the world at the equator is 24,901.55 miles).

Spiritual strength

Preaching, prayer and meditation...as well as love, empowered Jesus. To be connected with the Father was central to his message of reconciliation—new life under rule if awaits.

May the Eternal reign in our hearts as the first rays of the Easter sun rises on day with hope.

Love and light!

Special thanks to Mrs. Rose and Dr. Ira Regalado of South City Church (shelving) for lending me their book.

Discover An Exciting WORLD
WCT Alabang Academy
Wilma Cruz-Tapalla
www.wctacademe.com

CLOSE-KNIT PALS. Governor Josie Bonot Obrigon with Cha'let Dolby Isip, Noel Manzano, and close pals Mendie Kashpak and Ruby Girl Rubayat Fricke.

WEARE FAMILY. In Boracay, birthday girl Carla Reyes-T with husband, Al Reyes, and kids Alexandra, super sweeties-pie, and her Amanda Camille and Jean Xavier

They're all a year 'younger'

LIA Valencia, Dino Deniken and Sina Africa Alcedo

GANG OF 3. Nina Ramirez with the honoree, San Francisco-based Noreen Torres and Yoko Caballero

THE SLICK PACK. Freddie Dillon, magnate Jack Wong's aid Ric Ando, entertainer Candie Raymundo.

THE TOWN love to the beauty of the jewel brigade, Linda Gledare, favored venue of her closest pals to a four-day tour of the Ami Wind Resort on my destin in Lind, Bor neo).

First night were cocktails and just chilling out. The following day on the eve of her birthday, Linda gave a rub dinner, excellently prepared by the grand chef of Dea Mestizo, Bulgog Sumadiaz, sodzo, asinigan.

Bloggy prepared the nine-kinded superb pica pica including the fried in panko chorizo de Bilbao and lamb soup that was to die for. The fab birthday chef Linda is also revered for goes for that extra touch. It was brought by Manila based interior/exterior designer Nene Lucson, from Hara.

After lunch with the bubbly the gang partied and relaxed on the beach.

Next day, it was gourmet extravaganza Carla Reyes Tongco's turn to celebrate her birthday in Boracay, too. Her husband, aside for all occasions, really becomes redundant to Al Tongco, had a surprise for her and her 30 guests (most of them classmates of Manila's Zobel) who went all in Boys of the Town). He had the Hilaw band flown in from Manila to play during Carla's birthday bash.

Needless to say, it was dancing until we literally dropped, watch the last revelers staggered out at 5 a.m.

And that, dahlings, is awesome Boracay for you—the place to have two fab birthday parties.

JETSETTER and working socialite Karen Santos

POPULAR Tobie Vidal and pal-para Carol Madrigal Garcia

ROCKSTAR and rave girl glamour-ous Vicky Zobel

STILL enchanted ones. Mel Mei Cojuangco and husband Andres Zin

POISE. Brunette and wine connoisseur Paige Ortigas

FROM Singapore, stylish Kathy de Guzman, entrepreneurial wife-player and businesswoman Maja Zobel

RETRO Musician

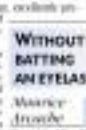
COMEDY Baron

SUPER PALS. Melissa Mercado Martel with junior Mercado

METRO Society's editor-in-chief Liz Bernardo and architect Rona Hui from Los Angeles

MAJOR Movie actor/director James Mendoza

HALF MIL. The gang's all here, including Mont-Carlo leader Nene Lucson, pretty Marichel Villanueva, Carla Tongco, Ribing Villanueva, Dading Nieva, Johnny Velasquez and Freddie Dillon; (seated) Adel Lucson, Mutya Moran, birthday girl Linda Obrador and Iris



WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arnaldo

Photos by Alley Yap Hagera

Makeup by Godak Lumchan

When you have two women costume at their...born with platinum spoons, educated in the best way possible, successful achievers in their own fields, and well-traveled then you can be sure that when they entertain, you will have the best of everything, well, almost the best of everything.

Golden boy

Avid paluagers, cousins Charles Rodrigo Gonzalez and Bebe Rodrigo Vazquez share a 30th birthday party for their close pal, golden boy Raul Montanez. They invited 50, mostly of Raul's closest friends for a 6th dinner at Dusit's sprawling well-manicured garden, which was decorated with eye-catching red Chinese lanterns and torches.

One long dinner table that sat 50, was so gaudy decorated by tasteful interior designer Bobo Gil Rubayat Fitche, who assisted Charles, extravagant. It was adorned with roses in candle lights and extravagant, plus loads of Chinese greenery including bamboo canes with fortune plants, goldfish contests, plus your's truly (see here) and lost bags with Electrolyte candles in ephemeral, mirrors and gold chocolate coins.

Spread out in one part of the garden were food stations where Le Soufflé's excellently catered buffet dinner was set up.

The evening started with cocktails and before I could say "Bobo Gil Rubayat" I was already entertaining guests. They enjoyed private pas de ad with zebra and white chairs, used for intimate cocktails and dinner amphitheaters organizers of Mr Governor herself, Annie Bayot Obrigon.

The main course consisted of a selection of everything savory and pounded up to the. But a Madrigal dinner a never complete without Annie it's yummy paella. Oh Cha-ba It's special request. Raul brought his Peruvian baked turkey and stuffing, he's recipe.

At the end of the dinner, Raul blew out the candle on his cake presented after his magnificent, with his orchestra.

Touching surprise

And, lastly, it was Al Tongco's turn to celebrate his all-something birthday bash at his home in Rockefeller in North Forbes, pulang-pai. The home was newly and tastefully decorated by the man, Budji Layug, himself.

It was an advance birthday celebration as most of the guests would be traveling over the town in xmas. Without batting an eyelash, 50 of his dearest pals were there to wish him many, many more happy, healthy and wealthy years to come. And, on the eve of his real birthday, he had a quiet dinner with a few dearest pals and friends from San Francisco, Trisha Cabalfuera and Shannon Torres, who were in town for a weekend visit.

Later did he know that his gang was "in-denial" for his wife Carla to pop up at their dinner eight before the actual birthday hour at midnight. He still did, to the absolute surprise of AL! We all sang the happy birthday song before the celebrant blew out to candle for another year of his beautiful life. He was so touched that, in the end, Al Tongco could only say, "Thank you" to all of us.

To our real friend Mr. Ambassador, let's have more sorpresa like this.

Cheers, paluagers.

ASSUMPTION PALS. Carol Garcia, Gina Sabaldan Hortaleza, Angel Donna Padilla, Marina Dizadito and Sandra Espinas Barreto

STANDING. Ian Frederic Amiel Immaculate Mata (wife Liz and Mel Gaglonone; (seated) Amy Soares and Mitzy Cojuangco

CHELONG Rebekkah Lorenzo and Sorsoko Barrera

HALL Salvador Mario's Cardenas Zaldarriaga Mata Concepcion Young

ATTRACTIVE Mendez Gonzalez Montoro and Pepper Sarkodee

HIGH in-demand designer and stylist Mike Sandoval and Dumaguete-ridiculously beautiful Mariel Vazquez Prado

BUSINESS magnate Jose Luis "Lui" Tuko

MODEL Grace

DARING Ray Ann Ray Ramirez

DOLCE Mendoza, the power behind the socialites dinner of birthday girl Linda O.; singer Del Sergio Ramirez, Bon Bon Bravo, Doc Marquez, Hermie Villaroza and Michael Cacanindin

Dealing with kids with psychic gi

"HAS it ever occurred to you that there seems to be more children with extraordinary psychic gifts born in the last 15 years than before?" several people have asked me.

I do not know whether this is just "coincidence," but yes, I have noted this trend lately. These gifted children begin to speak at an earlier age, they see things that ordinary people do not see, they can tell when a relative or friend will arrive before he or she knocks on the door, they can tell if an accident will happen, and scariest of all, they can tell with uncanny accuracy who will die in the family.

Several of these extraordinary children have been brought to me by their parents or relatives because they do not know how to handle the kids and what to do with their psychic gifts.

The children are fortunate if their parents are open-minded enough to seek professional psychic help. Otherwise, they may be considered freaks or possessed by the devil.

Last year, a worried mother residing in Ayala, Alabang, Muntinlupa, came to see me because her 10-year-old son could see and talk to his 20-year-old brother who died in a motorcycle accident. The dead brother appears to the boy almost every day and talks to him as if he were still alive, but only the younger brother could see him.

Another mother brought her 12-year-old son all the way from Sorsogon because he has been exhibiting extraordinary psychic powers. He can, for instance, see his own past lives, read other people's minds and see objects behind walls.

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

He has x-ray vision and can see diseased or malfunctioning organs of the human body without any medical instruments. He talks about his life as a German soldier during world war II and cries over the death of a comrade-in-arms in the Vietnam war.

A woman lawyer in Metro Manila wrote about her 7-year-old niece Gina (not her real name) living with the lawyer's parents in Antipolo. The girl has invisible playmates in school, sees the dead husband of her sister standing beside her, and sees other spirits in the house.

According to the aunt, Gina "is a consistent first honor (student) in her class, is very religious, reads the Bible and prays the rosary a lot, which is very surprising for her age. It is her religiosity that seems to be her refuge whenever she sees things."

Neither her parents nor Gina's brother shares her gifts, so they are scared whenever she begins to see things around them.

Scary but exciting

Yes, it can be very scary and nerve-ing to be with psychically gifted children, but it can also be very exciting. Conventional science has no idea how to deal with such people, neither does orthodox religion. What such gifted children are able to do are beyond these two disciplines' accepted paradigms.

In my book "The Psychic World and You" (published by De La Salle Press), I wrote a chapter on "Understanding the Psychic Child." In it, I gave some pointers on how to deal with the psychically gifted child.

First, parents should know the distinction between what is merely psychological and what is psychic.

What is psychological is inside us. They are composed of personal feelings, memories and other mainly subjective elements. The psychic world is independent of us. It is like the physical world. It is out there. It does not originate in our own personal history or background, and it is capable of objective verification.

Second, parents should make a distinction between what is ordinary misbehavior and behavior arising from genuine extrasensory perception of the child.

Although there are no cut and dried rules on how to deal with psychic children, the battle is half won, according to one foreign expert, if the child can be encouraged to talk about himself and what he sees or hears, with the assurance that he will not be criticized or ridiculed.

The worst thing that parents can do is to tell the child that he is only imagining things and leave it at that.

Address letters to this column to Prime Place I, 106 Legaspi St., Legaspi Village, Makati City. Call 8187561 or 8926505 for information on seminars. Contact E-mail: jlicauco@edsamail.com.ph. Visit my website at http://jlicauco.shorturl.com. Listen to my DZMM radio program 7-8 p.m. every Sunday.

The birthing room has plasma television, DVD player, stereo, computer with Internet access, refrigerator and bathroom, among others.

New delivery facility

ST. Luke's Medical Center (SLMC), recognized as one of the most mother-baby-friendly hospitals in the country, has a new facility for natural delivery.

Called The Birthing Room, the facility is designed to promote the safety and well-being of women and their newborn, as well as provide comfort for other members of the family. The room is designed with the Leboyer method in mind.

Dr. Filar Lagunzad-Ong, chair of SLMC's Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, says a child's birth is an important family event that should involve both parents.

Medical specialists, nurses and other hospital people were consulted in setting up the birthing room. Research was also done on similar facilities in the United States, where the concept has been adopted since the 1980s.

A distinct advantage of the birthing room is that it allows the patient to stay in just one bed throughout her hospital stay—from labor to post-delivery recovery. Right now, women are transferred from her room to the labor room, then delivery room and recovery room, before being returned to her original hospital room.

The birthing room is equipped with a special bed that can be converted into a delivery bed. At the back of the bed are medical equipment needed for safe delivery.

Though women staying in the birthing room have the option to deliver under anesthesia, natural delivery is encouraged. Call 7251541/7251212.

Low-calorie food guide

First of two parts

WELL AND GOOD
Tina Jison

A READER writes: "I am a working girl who is trying to get back in shape. I usually bring a pack lunch from home. What are some of the restaurants/fast food chains we can go to that offer more healthful choices?

"Do you have any helpful hints when looking at a menu? And what are our most healthful bets when ordering Filipino/Japanese/Chinese/Italian/American/Indian dishes?"

Yes, it is possible to eat out and still maintain your weight. You just have to make lower-calorie choices, from Marie Joy Bayard, author of "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Eating Smart", shows how to dine out without guilt.

But don't think you can eat double or triple portions just because you have chosen food from the lower calorie list. All calories taken end up in your hips, thighs or abdomen, for unfortunately and enjoy your food.

Chinese food

Lowest calorie choice
Hot and sour soup
Wonton soup
Steamed dumplings (vegetable, chicken or seafood)
Stir-fried or steamed chicken, beef, seafood, tofu, vegetables
Steamed whole fish
Moo-shu vegetables (with pancake roll ups)
Steamed brown or white rice
Fortune cookies
Lychee nuts
Orange and pineapple slices

Higher calorie items
Egg drop soup, egg rolls, egg foo yung
Fried dumplings and wontons
Fried rice
Cold noodles with sesame sauce
Moo shu pork
Sweet and sour pork
Fried chicken and seafood dishes
Seafood with lobster sauce
Spare ribs
Steamed duck or goose

French food

Lower calorie items
Steamed mussels
Consommé
Endive and watercress salads
Wonton crunch
Poached or steamed fish
Lightly sauteed vegetables
Bouillabaisse
Chicken in wine sauce
French bread and baguettes
Florentin d'oeufs
Poached eggs
Fruit and poached fruit

Fruit sorbet
Wine, in moderation
Higher calorie items
Appetizers with olives, anchovies or capers
Quiche
French onion soup with cheese
Cream-based soups
Pâté, foie gras, crepes, brioche
Duck or goose with skin
Anything with Normandy, Hollandaise, Bechamel or Mornay Sauce
Anything with the word "cream" or "au gratin"
Chocolate mousse
Crème caramel
Croissants
Pastries and eclairs

Indian food

Lower calorie items
Tandoori fish
Tandoori chicken, beef or fish
Chicken, beef and fish curry or vindaloo
Dhals/kabob
Gobhi mutter tamarind
Matar paneer
Steamed rice
Papadums or papad
Cucumber, tomato(es), and yogurt-based raitas
Chapati
Naan
Kulcha
Mango, mint and onion chutney
Highest calorie items
Anything made with Ghee
Coconut soups
Samosas
Korma
Curries made with coconut milk or cream
Pakora
Saag paneer
Creamy rice dishes
Fried breads
Stuffed paratha

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HENY SISON
CULINARY SCHOOL

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Prone wide row on stability ball

THIS exercise strengthens the back of the shoulders as well as the middle back.

Equipment
Dumbbells and stability ball

Exercise technique
1. Kneel down with the ball in front of you.
2. Place your torso on the ball and roll forward until you have both hands on the floor. Your legs should be straight behind you on your toes.
3. Hold one dumbbell in each hand. Lift to shoulder level.
4. Slowly lower down. Do the desired number of repetitions.

Performance tips
1. Exhale as you lift the dumbbells. Inhale as you bring them down.
2. Focus on lifting the dumbbells by contracting the muscles at the back of the shoulders and between the shoulder blades.
3. Make sure elbows stay facing the side rather than facing backwards.
4. Look down at the floor and keep your neck in line with your spine.
5. Avoid lifting beyond shoulder level so there is less stress on the shoulder joint.

Repetitions
12 to 15 repetitions

Free medical checkup

BETTER Herbs Inc., maker of Letaxcal (Better Sleep), Banaba-Ampalaya and Chelero-Redux natural food supplements, has launched a free medical checkup program as part of its corporate mission.

Medical director Dr. Ramon Angeles will be available for free consultations on sleep disorders, poor blood circulation, prostate cancer and other ailments 2-5 p.m., Monday and Tuesday, Gen 3000 (N. Bolinao Bldg., Edsa, San Juan. Call 7234076/7234076.

Better Herbs Letaxcal and Chelero-Redux are available at Mercury Drug, Watsons and other leading drugstores. Banaba-Ampalaya can be bought at Watsons and other leading drugstores.

Better Herbs Inc. received last year the Asia Pacific Excellence Award for Letaxcal (Better Sleep), cited as an innovative product for insomnia.

Choosing life

MARITONI Fernandez talks about her decision to keep her baby despite having breast cancer in the latest issue of Mom&Babies.

Noted pediatrician Dr. Cynthia Cenizo-Jison separates the truth from myth in "Newborn care, the Pinoy way!" She talks about how the popular practice of giving newborns ampalaya juice to remove the sewant or meconium (stool) may be harmful to the infant.

Yeng Prinz Valdez reveals a rare serious side in "The Best Lessons" her mother, Philippine Daily Inquirer chair Marixi Prieto, taught her.

Read the complete articles in Mom&Babies issue of March/April, available in all bookstores, newsstands, and retail outlets nationwide. Call 8968333 local 115 or e-mail ce-quirky.ph@sea.emprentius.com.